36-8
14

Princeton Theol. Seminary

Part of a donation from

Mrs R.L. and A. Stuart,

N.Y. 1854.

LIBRARY
OF THE
Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Case, Division
Shelf, Section
Book, No.

SCC
2819

TWENTY

SERMONS.

The first NINE of them

PREACHED

Before the KING in LENT.

Of Superstition.
Of contending for the Faith.
Of Judging one Another.
Of the true Use of the World.
Of the Love of Pleasure.
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.
Of Consistency in Religion.
No continuing City here.
Christ's Yoke Easy.
Of Persecution.
Of Zeal not according to Knowledge.
The Impossibility of serving God and Mammon.
The Ambition of Christ's Disciples reproved.
The different Characters of John Baptist and Jesus Christ.
The Extremes of Riches and Poverty.
The Good Samaritan.
Of our Duty under Afflictions.
The Christian Race.
The Best Christians unprofitable Servants.
The Nature of Christ's Blessing.

By BENJAMIN, Lord Bishop of *Winchester*.

LONDON,

Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON, at the *Crown* in *Ludgate-Street*. MDCCLV.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

Of SUPERSTITION.

Preached before the KING, *March* 23, 1717-18.

ACTS XVII. 22.

Then Paul *ſtood in the mids of Mars-hill, and ſaid, Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too Superſtitious.* pag. 1.

SERMON II.

Of contending for the FAITH.

Preached before the KING, *March* 13, 1719-20.

Epiſtle of JUDE, Verſe 3. latter Part.

It was needful for Me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints. pag. 21.

SERMON III.

Of Judging One Another.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 18, 1721-2.

ROMANS xiv. 4.

Who art thou that judgeſt another Man's Servant? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth, or falleth. pag. 47.

SERMON IV.

Of the true Uſe of this World.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 21, 1724-5.

1 CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

And They that uſe this World, as not abuſing it: For the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away. p. 65.

SERMON V.

Of the Love of Pleaſure.

Preached before the KING, *March* 10, 1727-8.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleaſures more than Lovers of God. pag. 85.

SER-

SERMON VI.

St. Paul's Diſcourſe to Felix.

Preached before the KING, *Febr* 15, 1729-30.

ACTS xxiv. part of 24th and 25th Verſes.

He ſent for Paul, *and heard Him concerning the Faith in* Chriſt: *And as He reaſoned of Righteouſneſs, Temperance, and Judgment to come,* Felix *trembled.* pag. 103.

SERMON VII.

Of Conſiſtency in all our Arguments about Religion.

Preached before the KING, *March* 5, 1731-2.

GALATIANS ii. ver. 18.

For if I build again the Things which I deſtroyed, I make myſelf a Tranſgreſſor. pag. 125.

SERMON VIII.

No continuing City here.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 23, 1734-5.

HEBREWS xiii. 14.

For here have We no continuing City; but We ſeek one to come. pag. 14.

SERMON IX.

Chriſt's Yoke, Eaſy; and Burthen, Light.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 27, 1736-7.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my Yoke *is Eaſy, and my* Burthen *is Light.* pag. 167.

SERMON X.

Of Perſecution on Account of Religion.

ROM. xiv. 4.

Who art Thou that Judgeſt Another Man's Servant? To his own Maſter, He ſtandeth or falleth. pag. 187.

SERMON XI.

Of Zeal not according to Knowledge.

ROM. x. 2.

I bear them record, that they have a Zeal *of* GOD, *but not according to* Knowledge. pag. 207.

SER-

SERMON XII.

The Impoſſibility of ſerving God and Mammon.

LUKE xvi. 13.

No Servant can ſerve two Maſters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe He will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve GOD *and* MAMMON. pag. 227.

SERMON XIII.

The Ambition of Chriſt's Diſciples reproved.

MATTHEW xx. 26, 27.

But it ſhall not be ſo amongst you: but whoſoever will be Great *amongst you, let him be your* Miniſter: *and whoſoever will be* Chief *amongſt you, let him be your* Servant. p. 249.

SERMON XIV.

The Different Characters of John the Baptiſt, and Jeſus Chriſt.

LUKE vii. 33, 34.

John *the* Baptiſt *came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and ye ſay, He hath a Devil. The* Son of man *is come, eating and drinking, and ye ſay, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.* pag. 271

SERMON XV.

The Extremes of Riches and Poverty.

PROVERBS xxx. 8, 9.

Give me neither Poverty, *nor* Riches; *feed me with Food convenient for me. Leſt I be full, and deny* Thee, *and ſay, Who is the Lord? Or, leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the Name of my* GOD *in vain.* pag. 295.

SERMON XVI.

The Good Samaritan.

LUKE x. 37.

Then ſaid Jeſus *unto Him, Go, and do Thou likewiſe.* pag. 317.

SERMON XVII.

Of the Duty of Chriſtians under Afflictions.

HEBREWS xii. 11.

Now, no Chaſtening *for the preſent, ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheleſs, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceful Fruit of Righteouſneſs, unto them which are exerciſed thereby.* pag. 339.

SERMON XVIII.

The Christian Race.

1 CORINTHIANS ix. 24. 25.

Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, *run all, but* One *receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Mastery is temperate in all Things. Now* They *do it to obtain a* corruptible *Crown, but* We *an* incorruptible. pag. 361.

SERMON XIX.

The Best Christians, unprofitable Servants.

LUKE xvii. ver. 10.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are Unprofitable Servants, *We have done that which was our Duty to do.* pag. 383.

SERMON XX.

The Nature of Christ's Blessing.

ACTS iii. ver. 26.

God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless You, in turning every one of you from his Iniquities. pag. 409.

ERRATA.

Pag.	*lin*	*for*	*read*
4.	10.	ever,	ſtill.
26.	11.	ſuch,	*Perſecution.*
30.	18.		but that.
31.	6.	*dele* what.	
44.	13.	*dele* is.	
75.	3.		ſeem.
132.	9.	*dele* rather.	
152.	23.	uneaſy,	frequent.
197.	24.	uſe in a ſuch,	treat in ſuch a.
198.	17.	which,	as.
209.	laſt,	*after* when, *add*	it.
211,	4, 5.	*for* and the ſtrong *Lines* of *moral Duty*, to which it always tends,	*read*, or the *moral Duties*, which it always commands.
224.	12.	Society,	their Synagogues.
Ib.	13.	They.	the *Jews*.
226.	8.	*after* Perfections ;	*add* and the *Goſpel* of his Son.
301.	8.	Conduct of,	change made in.
329.	12.	*after* Things, *add* by.	
331.	9.	conſiſts	conſiſt.
346.	14.	Remorſe,	Regret.
373.	20.	Paſſage,	Chapter.
Ib.	23.	*after* Shame, *add*, *Hebr.* xii. 2.	
392.	19.	this very,	another.
Ib.	23.	*after* Lord, *add*, *Matth.* xxv. 21, 23.	

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

Of SUPERSTITION.

SERMON I.

Preached before the KING, *March* 23, 1717-18.

ACTS XVII. 22.

Then Paul *ſtood in the midſt of Mars-hill, and ſaid, Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too Superſtitious.*

SERM. I.

SUPPOSING the Word *Superſtitious* to anſwer exactly to the *Word* in the *Original*; yet, it does not ſeem rightly tranſlated here by the Expreſſion *too ſuperſtitious*: becauſe this carries along with it an Implication that there is a Degree of *Superſtition*, not at all blameable; and that St. *Paul* in this Paſſage allows it; contrary to the conſtant Uſe of that Word amongſt Us, in a *bad* Senſe. The *Greek Word* for that Temper of Mind, relating to Religion, from which the *Athenians* are in *our Tranſlation* denominated *Superſtitious*, ſignifies a *Dread* of ſome *Superior Being*, or *Beings*; and commonly, an *Unreaſonable*, *Blind*, and *Gloomy*, Dread of ſuch Beings, lead-

SERM. I.

ing to great and various Abſurdities, about the Methods of pleaſing Them. And as the Word, uſed by St. *Paul*, implies in it a *Compariſon* of the *Athenians* with *Others*; and therefore ought to have been tranſlated, *more Superſtitious than ordinary*; or the like: I think, the *Apoſtle* may be truly repreſented as ſpeaking thus to *Thoſe* around Him,—"Ye Men of *Athens*, I perceive "that you are more thoroughly poſſeſſed with "the *Fear* of Inviſible Beings *Superior* to Us, "than I have found any Others to be. And "this I conclude, from what I have obſerved "of the public Marks of your *Worſhip* appear-"ing in the *City*. For, beſides your Altars to "numberleſs *Deities* with Names to them, in "which you agree with *Others*, all around "you; I found an Altar inſcribed *to the Un-"known God:* which uncommon Appearance "muſt be owing to a very extraordinary De-"gree of a dark, and uncomfortable *Dread* of "ſome Superior Being, though you know not "what: Whom you fear you may otherwiſe "be thought to have neglected," *&c.*

But, as it is my preſent Deſign to take Occaſion from the Words of the *Text*, as they ſtand in *Our Tranſlation*, to ſpeak in ſuch a manner upon the Subject of *Superſtition*, as may be of general Uſe, and Service, to All *Chriſtians*, in the great Affair of True Religion; I ſhall not enter farther into any *Critical* Enquiries

ries about the preciſe Meaning of the Words in the *Original*; or the *whole Intention* of St. *Paul*, in this Diſcourſe: but ſhall endeavour,

I. To ſay Something about the *Nature* of *Superſtition*, conſidered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

II. To point out the True *Remedy* of it. And,

III. To apply what I ſhall have ſaid, to *Chriſtians*, and to the preſent State of *Chriſtianity* in the World.

I. I will endeavour to give you ſome Account of the *Nature* of *Superſtition*, conſidered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

And, this having been much the ſame, both amongſt Thoſe who have not lived under any expreſs *Revelation* from God, and Thoſe who have; the *General Account* of it muſt, I ſuppoſe, be given, entirely with Relation to that *Faith*, that *Worſhip*, and that *Practice*, to which, both theſe Sorts of Perſons might ſee themſelves to be truly and ſtrictly obliged, as their *Religion*, and *Duty*.

With reſpect therefore, to *Heathens*, the beſt Account I can, at preſent, think of, is this; That the *Superſtition* of *Heathens* conſiſted in every Particular, which either their *Fear*, or their *Folly*; either the Strength of their *Imagination*, or the Weakneſs of their *Judgment*; or the *De-*

SERM. I.

ſign and Artifice of their *Leaders*; taught them to embrace, in order to pleaſe any Being, or Beings, ſuperior to themſelves, whom they made the Objects of their Religious regards: Every thing, I ſay, of this Sort, whether relating to their *Faith*, or to the *Nature* or *Manner* of their *Worſhip*, or to the *Practice* of their *Lives*; which was contradictory or diſagreeable to the juſt Notions in ſuch important Matters, which were then, and ever are, and ever will be, the certain and plain Reſult of the Common Reaſon of Mankind, exerciſed upon ſuch Subjects. *This* it was, that was to be their Conducter in *Religious* Affairs; and therefore, it is by comparing it with what their *Reaſon* ought to have led them to make their *Religion*, that you muſt judge what it was that the *Superſtition* of the *Heathens* conſiſted in.

And thus it was that St. *Paul* judged of the *Superſtition* of the *Athenians*, with regard to their *Worſhip:* as is plain from his Diſcourſe to Them. He ſaw, amongſt many others, an Altar dedicated to the *Unknown God*; and this he concluded to have been raiſed by their *ſuperſtitious* Fear, and blind *Dread*, of They knew not what: when, at the ſame time, They ought to have argued, from the Works of Nature, in every Year, and Seaſon, and Day, That the Supreme GOD and Governour of the World, had made Himſelf Sufficiently

ficiently *known* to Them, as the ſole Object of Religious Worſhip, by theſe *Works* of his, which were always before their Eyes.

2. Agreeably to this, the *Superſtition* of *Chriſtians*, conſidered as *Chriſtians*, the Followers of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as a Teacher ſent of GOD, muſt conſiſt in *every Particular*, which any Perſons, called *Chriſtians*, have added, or may add, to the plain and expreſs *Declarations* of their *Lord* and Maſter himſelf; under the Notion of ſomething neceſſary to our pleaſing and ſerving God: whether it reſpect the *Object* of our *Faith*; the *Object* or *Manner* of our *Worſhip*; or the *Conduct* and *Practice* of our *Lives*.

The Difference, in this caſe, with regard to *Heathens* and *Chriſtians*, you will ſee, to be very ſmall, in the End: becauſe it was the Great Deſign of our *Lord's* appearing in the World, utterly to deſtroy the whole Fabric of *Superſtition*; to reſtore the Dictates of *Uncorrupted Reaſon* to their *Force* and *Authority*; and, by calling the World to believe in *Him*, as ſent by *God*, to replace the only Method of pleaſing Him, upon that *True Foundation*, upon which it ought to have been placed, whether He had appeared amongſt Men, or not.

So that the *Difference* between *True Religion*, and *Superſtition*, ſeems to be this; that the *Former* is the *Argument* of the Judgment and

SERM. I.

Underſtanding, collecting, from the juſt Notions of a GOD, enforced upon *Chriſtians* by the plaineſt *Declarations* of their *Maſter*, the only poſſible Method of pleaſing Him: and the *Latter* is the Reſult of ungoverned Paſſion; either the *Hope* of pleaſing God with ſomething entirely diſtinct from, and contrary to, thoſe Notions; or the uneaſy *Fear* that He will not be pleaſed, without the *Addition* of ſomething which has no Relation to them.

We may therefore, as we paſs, obſerve that *Superſtition*, in ſome Reſpects, is *That* to *Religion*, which, in common Life, the *Flattery* of a falſe Tongue is, to the *Sincerity* of *Converſation* and *Friendſhip*. *Flattery* takes the Place, and often the very Aire and Mien, of ſincere Profeſſion. It puts itſelf inſtead of *Friendſhip*; and hopes to be taken for it. It is made up of pleaſing Sounds, and Expreſſions: and the *Appearance* is of ſomething good. But then, it is founded upon a Baſeneſs of Soul; hoping to pleaſe, or fearing to diſpleaſe, without any thing *within* anſwering to thoſe Profeſſions. And, in the End, the Evil is, That, when the *Maſque* is, by ſome Accident, taken off; the Reproaches which are due only to the *Falſeneſs* of ſuch *Pretenſes*, are caſt, by ſuch as are not able well to diſtinguiſh, upon the ſincere Profeſſions of *Friendſhip* itſelf, which it only imitated.

And,

SERM. I.

And, in the same manner, *Superstition* hath thrust itself into the Place of *Religion*; and is become an *Idol*, to which the greater Part of the World hath long continued to bow down: And, having usurped, not only the *Place*, but the Garb and Language, of *Religion*; no great wonder that, in all Ages, both in the *Heathen* and *Christian* World, the *Scandals*, occasioned by the *Former* only, have been put to the Account of the *Latter*; and the *Evils* which the Madness of *Superstition* alone hath produced, have been *all*, in general, charged upon *Religion*, which in its true Nature tends to prevent them: nay, that the very Word *Religion* hath come to stand for that *System* of *Superstitions*, whatsoever it be, which has prevailed in any *Country*, or Society. But to return,

The principal thing to be regarded, under this *first* Head, is, That every Particular, embraced as something necessary to the pleasing of GOD, which is not plainly declared to be so, either by the Voice of *Reason*, or the *Words* of the *Gospel*, is the *Superstition* of *Men*, and of *Christians*; whether it relate to *Faith*, *Worship*, or *Practice*. But the *next* great Point is,

II. To point out the *true Remedy* of this immense and deplorable Evil: an Evil, so much the more difficult to be cured, as it is

SERM. I.

founded upon the Paſſions of Men; and flatters thoſe Inclinations, which Cuſtom and Education have made ſtrong. This, it is plain, muſt be a *Remedy*, ſuitable to the Nature, and firſt Principle, of the *Evil*. And, the *Evil* conſiſting in departing from one certain ſteady Rule; the proper *Remedy* muſt conſiſt in the reducing Men to that Rule, from which they ought not to have departed. I ſhall now, therefore, propoſe what the *Goſpel*, as it is repreſented by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, profeſſes and deſigns to do, in order to this. And then we ſhall judge whether any thing can be more reaſonable in itſelf, more beneficial to Mankind, or, conſequently, more honourable to the *Goſpel* itſelf.

You may eaſily ſee what this is, even by St. *Paul's* Conduct in this *Chapter*. At the 22[d] verſe, he takes Notice of the Great *Superſtition* of the *Athenians*; and, at the 23[d] and following verſes, he propoſeth to them, as the only Cure for it, *firſt*, the Knowledge of that One God, whom alone they ought to worſhip: *Then*, the Nature of that *Worſhip* which is due to ſuch a Being, not confined to, or dependent upon, particular Places, or Circumſtances; but ſuitable to the Nature of a *Being*, always and every where preſent with us: *Then*, the Neceſſity of *Repentance*, that is, of altering whatſoever was bad in the Conduct of their

their Lives; for which he urgeth this Argument, that the GOD, whom he preaches to Them, as *known* by his Works, is the same God, who will *judge the World, by Jesus Christ, whom he raised from the Dead*, as a sensible Assurance of this Truth. Here then St. *Paul* represents to them *Religion*, instead of their former *Superstition*, under the Notion of *knowing*, and *worshiping*, *One God*, the *Maker*, the *Governour*, the *Judge*, of the World; and of practising all that is good and praise-worthy. SERM. I.

You see, therefore, that *True Religion*, which is, in the Nature of Things, (and I wish I could say, in *Time*, a great deal) more antient than the *Corruption* of it, is, Virtue in all its Extent, regularly practised and pursued, under the Sense of the supreme Being, the *Creator*, *Governour*, and *Judge*, of the World. And this is That to which St. *Paul*, and his Fellow-Labourers, were constantly calling back the World of *Unbelievers*; and pressing upon *Believers* also.

And all this is perfectly agreeable to what our *Saviour* himself, in plain Words, proposed uponmany Occasions, through his Life, with respect to *Faith*, to *Worship*, and to *Practice*. With regard to *Faith*; He declares, in *one* of his *Prayers* to God, his *Father*, that it was the Knowledge of Him, the *only true God*, which He

SERM. I.

He was endeavouring to bring the World to, by calling them to believe in Himself, sent by that *True God*. With Respect to *Worship*, He had an Occasion offered, in his Conversation with the Woman of *Samaria*, to declare, that this *Worship* was not to be confined to any such Circumstances, as particular *Places*, or the like; but must be agreeable to the Nature of the Being worshiped; that the *Father*, (for he speaks all along of *Him*) was then seeking such *Worshipers*, as would not worship what they knew nothing of; or, would not worship *Him* any otherwise, than *in Spirit and Truth*. And then, as to the Conduct of Life, and *Practice*; his *Declarations*, in general, are all referred to the *Nature*, and *Attributes*, of the *Supreme Father* of all Things; to the doing *his* Will; to the imitating *his* Perfections; and to the practising every thing recommended by that *Law* of *Reason*, which He sent our Lord to revive and enforce.

For, in this last Particular of *Practice*, it is evident, that neither our *Lord*, nor his *immediate Disciples*, have framed any *exact System* of *Morality*, explicitly mentioning every particular *Duty*, or *Sin*; but have thought it better to appeal, in most Instances, to the *Great* and *Universal Law* of *Reason*, which they send every *Christian* to consult, with Sincerity and

and Uprightneſs of Heart, as he will anſwer it at the Great Day of Accounts. SERM. I.

But in the Caſe of *Worſhip*, in which the Inventions and Follies of Men had ſhewn themſelves wantonly and infinitely various, to all the Degrees of *Superſtition*; He took occaſion to be a little more particular. In that *Prayer* which he taught his *Diſciples*, He leads his Followers to the *Object* of their *Worſhip*, GOD, under the moſt eaſy, and the moſt intelligible, Notion of a *Father*: including every thing relating both to *Authority* and *Goodneſs*; and repreſenting Him to us as our Great *Maker*, *Governour*, and *Benefactor*. He then goes on to the *Matter* of our *Prayers*, in a Manner ſo plain, and in Expreſſions ſo far removed from every Word, that either ſuppoſes any *Paſſion* within, or can be deſigned to raiſe one, that it is well worth while for Us all to conſider, and imitate it, by ſpeaking to God, agreeably to *his* Nature, and *our* Relation to Him; and expreſſing our Sentiments before Him, more with our *Underſtanding*, than with our *Paſſions*. And certainly, whatever is the Reſult of the *Underſtanding* is likely to laſt, and to have an Effect upon our Minds and Lives: But *Paſſion*, raiſed for a preſent Occaſion, and then naturally ceaſing, can hardly be thought to leave the Mind more

SERM. I.

more guarded, and better armed, for the Conduct of our *Practice*, than it was before. And this I mention, and preſs, in a very particular Manner, becauſe I think it of the utmoſt Importance, that the Duty of *Prayer*, which is the Worſhip of the Great God, ſhould not, by the Operation of *Superſtition*, become, in the Opinion and Practice of any *Chriſtians*, the *Art* of raiſing a preſent Paſſion, upon a preſent Occaſion; inſtead of the moſt likely Method of forming the laſting Habit of a Diſpoſition to all that is Good; and the Expreſſion of Thoſe Sentiments, which alone ought to be expreſſed before God. But, to return,

As *Worſhip*, and *Practice*, muſt depend upon *Faith*, and *Knowledge*; and, as the *Superſtition* of *Worſhip* and *Practice* muſt depend upon the *Superſtition* of *Faith*; ſo the Cure of this muſt begin at the *Foundation*. And accordingly, the Deſign of the *Goſpel* is to reclaim Men from the *Superſtition* of *Worſhip* and *Practice*, by recalling them to the *Belief* of the *One Supreme God*, whoſe Nature ſhews both how He is to be *worſhiped*, and how He is to be *ſerved*. But, as I have obſerved, with regard to *Practice* in general, that the *Goſpel* doth not draw up a *Formal Syſtem* of the Bounds and Nature of every *Virtue* and *Vice*; but ſends all Men to the original Univerſal

SERM. I.

ſal Law; and refers them to the Imitation of God: ſo, it may be remarked, that in thoſe Caſes of *Practice* itſelf, in which *Imagination* and *Paſſion* might be ſuppoſed to have moſt Scope, the greateſt Care hath been taken to guard againſt the ill Effect of them. For Inſtance, the Love of GOD, and the Love of our Neighbour, which are ſpoken of, in the New Teſtament, as *Duties* to which all Men, of all Tempers and Diſpoſitions, are *equally* obliged; are ſo plainly deſcribed, that every *Chriſtian* may ſee, that Whoſoever *keeps the Commandments* of GOD, (which always ſuppoſes the Belief and Knowledge of his amiable Perfections,) will be eſteemed by his Judge to *love* GOD truly; and that He who *worketh no Evil* to his Neighbour, but all the Good in his Power, is truly poſſeſſed of that *Love* of his *Neighbour* which is the *fulfilling* the *Law*, as far as Social Life is concerned: and may from hence make himſelf eaſy, if he cannot boaſt of thoſe extraordinary Emotions, or Practices, which ſome *Others* ſpeak of; but which, at leaſt, cannot be ſaid to be made the *Duty* of *All*, by their great Law-giver. This ſeems to have been deſigned againſt the *Superſtition* of *Practice*; as it was taking the Workings of the heated Imaginations of Men, as much as poſſible, out of the Reli-

SERM. I.

gion of their Lives. It was removing, out of the Account, every Thing, which might create in *Some*, the *ſuperſtitious Hope* of pleaſing God with ſomething, which He has never inſiſted upon; and in *Others*, the *ſuperſtitious Fear* of diſpleaſing him, for want of it: And founding *Religion* upon ſomething which *All* Men can find their Part in; and not upon Any Point, which the differing *Tempers* and *Diſpoſitions* of Men make impoſſible to *All*, in a Matter made equally the Duty of *All*. Nothing, indeed, in the *Diſpenſation* of *Chriſt*, relating to *Practice*, appears to be deſigned, or framed, to excite in the Soul, *within*, any Thought leading to Practical *Superſtition*; but every Part of it conſpires to form a regular Conduct of Life, *without*.

You ſee, then, how rational a *Remedy* the *Goſpel*, in its Purity, propoſeth, to cure the World of *Superſtition*; by calling All Men to a *Worſhip*, and to a *Practice*, worthy of God, and worthy of Man: and to rid the Minds of Men of unconceivable Uneaſineſſes, by placing the Service of GOD upon Principles agreeable to the *Judgment* and *Conſcience*, upon which alone inward *Peace* depends.

I know of nothing ſet up, in Oppoſition to this, but *Atheiſm*, or a *total Infidelity*. And this, if it be thoroughly imbibed, which is hardly

hardly poſſible to ſuppoſe, will indeed, rid the Mind of any *Superſtitions* relating to the pleaſing that Great Being, which it baniſhes out of the World. But then, there are two or three Conſiderations, which I have not time to enlarge upon, but which will be of great Force, at the bare Mention of them: *viz.* that *Atheiſm* is itſelf founded upon a *Contradiction* to all the Principles of *Science*, in the World: That, though it may rid the Mind of *ſome Superſtitions*, yet, it gives no *Support* in the room of them: That it is, itſelf, where it is pretended to be, often ſeen to be accompanied with very odd and unaccountable *Superſtitions*, of another ſort; and ſome of them very uneaſy ones: and, laſtly, what is very material, That, in *moſt* Nations of the World, They, who ſeem to have Recourſe to it for *themſelves*, have ſo little Love to the Happineſs of their *Fellow-creatures*, that they think Them fit for nothing but to be governed by the Tyranny of *Superſtition*; and that, wherever it lies within their Reach, They are ſo far from any Willingneſs to enter into any Meaſures of abating the *Terrors* and *Dreads* of it, that they rather are induced the more to continue, and improve, the Force of thoſe ſuperſtitious Terrors upon Others, by their own *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity*. SERM. I.

The

SERM. I.

The *Gospel*, with a more generous and noble Spirit, labours with the *Lowest* as well as the *Highest*, the *Meanest* as well as the *Brightest*, Understandings, to bring Mankind, by a few plain, easy, general Principles, common to all, from the Oppression and Unhappiness of *Superstition*; both to know truly, and to practice constantly, what is necessary to their pleasing God. This is a Point, which it is evident, from the Experience of all Ages, and from the vast Variety of Inventions of Men upon this Head, of infinite Importance to the Ease and Quiet of their Lives here, as well as to their Happiness hereafter. And therefore, it was a Matter, worthy of the *Son* of *God's* Appearing in the World: and it is what He hath performed in a Manner agreeable to the Nature of God, and to the Frame of the Mind of Man. And now, as I proposed in the last Place,

III. I come to the Application of what has been said, to *Christians*, and the present State of *Christianity*. And this is too plain, and obvious, to need many Words.

It is an easy Matter for Men to see, and complain of, *Superstition* in Others. It is easy for the *Church* of *Rome*, loaded with the *Foppery* of *Ceremonies* without Number; distracted with the Variety of *Objects* of *Worship*; full of *new-*

new-invented Methods of pleasing God, by I know not what Bodily Austerities, instead of the one Austerity of Virtue; and guarded round about with all the *Allurements* of this World's Pomp and Dignity, on one Side, and all its *Terrors*, on the other: It is an easy Matter, I say, for a *Church*, so at ease within its own Fences, to sit and make great Outcries against the *Superstition* of the *Pagans*; and to send out their *Missionaries*, to disturb and molest Them, only to engage them to exchange *One* set of *Superstitions*, for *Another*, I greatly fear, as wicked and as destructive. SERM. I.

It is easy, again, for Those who have reformed from that *Church*, to spend their Time and Breath, in Invectives against *Romish Superstitions*; or, amongst Themselves, in complaining of one another. But the true *Point* of Thought, in which every *Christian*, and every distinct *Body* of *Christians*, should fix, is, what is their own Case? and what is their own Conduct, with respect to the *Three* great Points of *Faith*, *Worship*, and *Practice?*

If they set up any *Beings*, as *Objects* of the *same Faith*, but That proposed by *Christ* himself, The *One* only supreme God; They do by this lay the Ground-work of *Superstition*, in themselves, and others. If they pay the *same Worship* to any Being, distinct from that same

SERM. I.

One Supreme Being; or, if they multiply the *inviſible Objects* of any Degree of *Religious Reſpect*, beyond the Authority of what is written; leading Men to ſpend the Vigour of their Souls, due to the Worſhip of the One Supreme God, upon a Number of *Objects*, inferior to Him: This is the *Superſtition* of *Worſhip*, from which their Maſter called the World. Or, if they confine the *Acceptableneſs* of the *Worſhip* of GOD, to any particular *Places*, or *Ceremonies*, or *Words*, or *Forms*; This is alſo a *Superſtition*, contrary to the Nature of that *Worſhip*, the *Acceptableneſs* of which our Lord Himſelf placed upon *Spirit* and *Truth*.

And again, if They take upon them to make the *Favour of God* to depend upon any thing, beſides what our Lord declared it to depend upon; repreſenting GOD to be delighted with Trifles, or reconciled by Follies; encouraging Men to hope for his Favour, upon their Performance of ſomething diſtinct from the keeping his Commandments; or leading Men to fear his Diſpleaſure, for not having added an exact Obſervation of what Men have inſtituted in Religion, to what He himſelf hath declared to be ſufficient to Salvation: This is the *Guilt* of *Superſtition*, with regard to *Practice*; to be charged upon All, who have any hand in it.

It

SERM. I.

It is apparent from the Nature of this Evil, That no Cure for it can be hoped for, till the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt* ſhall be eſtabliſhed amongſt *Chriſtians*; and his own Subjects acknowledge *Him*, by their Practice, to be their *King*. And, When *Chriſt's* Authority is once ſuffered to ſettle the *Faith* and *Worſhip* of *Chriſtians*; when Obedience to *His* Commands, under the Conduct of that Faith, is ſuffered to paſs for *Religion*; when the Rule of every *Chriſtian* Man's Conduct is univerſally allowed to be his ſincere Attention to the Directions of *Chriſt*; and *Chriſtians* are ſo upright as to take That for their Religion, which they find recommended by their Lord, and his immediate Followers: *Then*, and *Then* only, the *Faith*, and *Worſhip*, and *Practice*, of *Chriſtians*, will juſtly be ſaid to be all reſtored, and redeemed from the Follies of *Superſtition*. But till this happy Time comes, How great and deplorable an Unhappineſs muſt it be thought, that the very *Believing* in *Jeſus Chriſt*, which was propoſed to put a ſtop to all the *Superſtition* in the World, ſhould, by the crafty Deſigns of ſome, and the Weakneſs of others, be itſelf made the Inlet and Occaſion to that *ſame Evil*, amongſt *Any* that are called by that Holy Name; and to ſo ſhameful a Degree, as We ſee it to be, in many Nations round about us.

SERM. I.

Nothing, I am perſuaded, is wanting, but to uncover the Face of our moſt *Holy Religion*: and then, there can be little Doubt, but that It's moſt dangerous *Rival*, and powerful *Enemy*, muſt fly before it; and that *Chriſtianity* will at length get the better of the *Superſtition* of *Chriſtians*, as it did at firſt of the *Superſtition* of *Heathens*.

Of

Of contending for the FAITH.

SERMON II.

Preached before the KING, *March* 13, 1719-20.

Epiſtle of JUDE, Verſe 3. latter Part.

It was needful for Me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints.

IN order to find out the Nature of what is very ſtrongly recommended to *Chriſtians* in theſe Words, I propoſe, SERM. II.

I. To explain the *Words* themſelves.

II. To obſerve from thence by what Methods we can moſt effectually anſwer the real firſt Deſign of them. And,

III. From the Whole, to draw ſuch Obſervations,

SERM. II.

servations, as may convince Us of the Iniquity, and Folly, of pretending to answer their Design by other and contrary Methods.

I. The *Words* ought to be explained. And this Explanation ought to be taken from the plain Purport of the whole short *Epistle*, in which they are; from the *Time* when it was written; and from the *Circumstances* of *Christianity*, and of *Christians*, at that Time. The Duty, here recommended to *Christians*, is to *contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*; that is, in the Language of the *Apostles*, to all who professed themselves *Christians*: the *Title* of *Saints* not being, at that Time, appropriated to particular Persons; but, in common, given to All *Christians*, to put them in mind of their *Profession*, and what *Obligations* to *Holiness* it carried along with it. This *Faith*, here *to be contended for*, was the *Faith* taught and delivered, *before* this *Epistle* was written; being spoken of here, as already known and settled. The Expression of *contending earnestly*, Επαγωνίζεσθαι, is taken from the *Contests*, *Games*, and *Races*, then in Use in the *Heathen* World; in which the *Contenders* for imaginary Glory strove, with all their Might, against their Adversaries. But, as amongst these *Contenders*, there were certain *Rules* and *Orders*, by

by which They were all to be governed in their *Conteſts*; upon pain of forfeiting all Pretenſe to Victory or Reward, if they tranſgreſſed one of thoſe *Rules*, which were the *fixed Laws* of thoſe *Conteſts:* So, the *earneſt Contention* of *Chriſtians*, for the *Faith once delivered*, muſt be governed by thoſe *Rules*, and kept within thoſe *Bounds*, and directed by thoſe *Laws*, which their Great Maſter, the *Judge* of the *Conteſt*, has declared and eſtabliſhed. SERM. II.

If any one, who entered into the *Conteſts*, or *Games*, then common in the Heathen World, pretended to get the better, *i. e.* to overcome, hurt, or deſtroy, his Adverſary, by any Method, contrary to the *Laws* fixed by the *Governours* or *Judges* of thoſe *Conteſts*; He was not adjudged to have the *Glory* of *Conqueſt*, but the *Shame* of *Injuſtice*. And ſo, in the *Chriſtian Conteſt*, if *Chriſtian Methods* are not uniformly and conſtantly made uſe of; the *Earneſtneſs* of the *Contention* is only a ſo much greater Deviation from the Duty of a *Chriſtian*. One *Chriſtian* may cruſh or oppreſs the Perſon of Another, againſt whom He contends, on Account of ſome Differences in Religion: But he cannot contend for *the Faith once delivered*, ſo as to reap any Fruit of ſuch Conteſt, without con-

SERM. II. tending in the *Methods* prescribed by *Christ* himself. This is in *general*.

But, in *particular*, If we consider this *earnest Contest for the Faith*, here recommended by St. *Jude*, in conjunction with the *Circumstances* with which *Christians* were then surrounded; the *Methods* of *Contest* could be none but such as were suitable to those Circumstances. They had not then in their hands the Weapons of this World, to lance at one another: And therefore, the Weapons of their Warfare could be *then* no other than *spiritual*. They were all surrounded with persecuting *Unbelievers*: and probably, one Part of this *earnest Contention* for their Faith, here recommended to them, (if not the main Part,) was the entering into that *Contest*, and Strife, of *Suffering* for this *Faith*, which Others, in this *Epistle* are described as willing to decline. This, I say, was *One* Instance of the earnest *Contest* here proposed; the enduring Difficulties, the running that *Race* of Sufferings, mentioned in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* (and styled there Αγων) the *Suffering* on Account of this Faith, and by the powerful Assistance of it: Not the *Fury* of *Zeal*, in bringing Others to Corporal Sufferings, for the Sake of what They believed; but the Constancy of Patience in suffering themselves for what They knew

knew to have been *delivered to them* by their Master and Saviour. And this Sense will not be at all disagreeable to the Word in the *Original*; or the *Circumstances* of *Christians* at that Time; or to the rest of the *Epistle:* in which some Men amongst *Christians* are described as Wicked Perverters of the Gospel; and ready to deny the *Faith* They professed. SERM. II.

But, if we take the Word as implying merely a Contest for the Faith against these *Primitive Adversaries*, here mentioned, as crept in amongst *Christians*; We cannot help observing how they are described all through this short *Epistle:* Not, as honest *Enquirers* after Truth, but as wicked *Perverters* of the whole Design of *Christianity:* Not, as Persons willing to receive that *Faith*, which had been *delivered to the Saints*; but, as wilful Opposers of what they might have known to have been so *delivered:* Not, as Persons ready to lay down their Lives, or suffer all worldly Inconveniences, for what, after their best Inquiries, appeared to them to have been the *true Faith* of *Christians*; but, as Persons ready to renounce what they would otherwise pretend to profess, for fear of Worldly Sufferings.

This Circumstance will likewise teach *Christians* the *Measure*, the *Temper*, and the *Bounds*, of their *Contests* about their mutual Differ-

SERM. II.

ences in ſome Points of *Belief*, at this great Diſtance from the original Delivery of the *Chriſtian Faith:* For, in what Men ſoever the *Marks* of unfeigned *Sincerity* are found, though but equal to Thoſe which we may ſuppoſe in Others; and eſpecially, if there be good ground to believe a Readineſs and Reſolution to ſuffer for what They apprehend to be Truth; and but as great a Probability of *their* ſuffering under the *Perſecution* of *Unbelievers*, if any ſuch ſhould be, as there can be that any *Others* will have Conſtancy enough to do it: And, much more ſtill, if they give Proof by the whole Tenor of their Lives, of their real *Faith* in *Jeſus Chriſt*; and actually renounce, upon any juſt Occaſion, many of the Comforts and Supports of this World, for the Sake of what they think to be His Will: I ſay, upon theſe Suppoſitions, the Characters and Deſcriptions in this *Epiſtle* are not adapted nor deſigned for ſuch Men; nor are theſe the Perſons againſt whom *Chriſtians* are allarmed and forewarned in the *Text*.

But, granting that all ſuch profeſſed *Chriſtians* are here comprehended, as do truly, or are ſuppoſed to, err in Points of *Faith*; what is the *Remedy*, or the Method propoſed to *Chriſtians*, in this Caſe? It is a plain one, and was very eaſy in thoſe early Days: No other than,

than, in all their Conteſts about ſuch Matters, to keep themſelves ſtrictly to the *Faith*, which *had been*, before this, *delivered to the Saints.* This leads us to the SERM. II.

II. *Second Enquiry* I propoſed, *viz.* by what Methods we can moſt effectually anſwer the real original Deſign of theſe Words.

The *firſt* Obſervation which here naturally offers itſelf, is, That, in order to *contend earneſtly* for the *Faith delivered to Chriſtians*, before this Epiſtle was written, we muſt find out what that *Faith* was, which was then actually and compleatly delivered. And this will neceſſarily engage us to aſk, where *We* ſhall ſeek for it, who live ſo many Ages from that Time? And what can we anſwer to this, but that we muſt ſeek for it in thoſe Books, in which alone it is to be found; which were either writ *before* this Epiſtle; or by Perſons of that Age, empowered to deliver this *Faith*; not to be ſuſpected of Error in their Delivery of it, and enabled to prove their Commiſſion to the World: who, therefore, muſt be allowed to *deliver the ſame Faith*, without any Variation or Contradiction. To this plain, and only ſatisfactory Method, I am ſenſible there are many *Adverſaries*, and many *Objections* raiſed.

There are ſome *Chriſtians*, (and a very numerous

SERM. II.

merous Body of Men they are,) who know no other Guides, but the living Guides of the preſent Church; and acknowledge no other *Faith*, for the Faith *once delivered to the Saints*, about *Seventeen Hundred* Years ago, but that which is *now* delivered to them by their *preſent Rulers*, as ſuch. One Part of Theſe, and much the greater, take a very ſhort Method of eſtabliſhing this Point; and That is, by firſt laying down the *Infallibility* of the *Preſent* Church, and of every Man of the paſt Ages, through whoſe Mouth, or by whoſe Hands, the preſent *Traditions* of *Faith* have all deſcended to them. And this, indeed, would be a very good Method, if that ſingle Point of *Infallibility* could be proved.

But this is a *Point* ſo groſs, and ſo utterly void of all Proof, that a great Body of the *Chriſtian World* have broke looſe from the Power of this Monſter. And, in order to This, they had no other way but to declare for the *New Teſtament* itſelf, as the only *Guide*, or *Rule* of *Faith*; the only *Deliverer* of this *Faith* to *Us* of later Ages. And This is the very *Rule*, I have now laid down. But, when This comes to be put in Practice; too many of the ſame Perſons who have ſet it up as the Only Guide, turn round on a ſudden, and let us know that They mean by it, not

thoſe

thoſe Sacred Original Writings themſelves, but the *Interpretations*, or *Senſe*, put upon them by Our Spiritual *Superiors*, to which We are ſometimes ſaid to be obliged, and bound in Duty to ſubmit; and ſometimes are allowed a *Liberty* of *Examination*: but in effect, put under an Obligation to find *That* to be *Truth* which is taught by theſe Leaders.

SERM. II.

Upon *this* Head, there is again as great a Variety of Judgment, as there is amongſt Others about the *Seat* of *Infallibility*. Sometimes, we are aſked, whether we ought not to pay a regard to Thoſe whoſe Buſineſs, and probably ſincere Study, it is, to find out the Truth; and to diſpenſe it to Us? Yes, undoubtedly; the Regard of ſerious Attention, and the Reſpect of a due Examination of what They affirm: but not the *Submiſſion* due only to *Infallibility*. Shall we not ſubmit *our* low Underſtandings to the higher Underſtandings of Others? or ſhall we pretend to oppoſe Our Judgments to Thoſe of our *Superiors*, in Matters of this Kind? Let theſe, and the like, Queſtions be aſked concerning the *Chriſtian Laity*, in *all* the *Popiſh*, and *many* of the *Proteſtant*, Countries: and Thoſe of *our* Church will unanimouſly anſwer, No: The Rule is quite otherwiſe. Nay, with regard to the *Reformation*, it has been long ago, with one conſent, ſaid,

SERM. II.

said, that it was a glorious thing not to submit to the *Voice* of *Any* Men: but to reserve *that* Regard, for *God*, and for *Christ*, in Matters of *Faith* once *delivered to the Saints*.

And, again, It is asked by others, Is there not a surer way of knowing what was *delivered* about *Seventeen hundred Years* ago, than by going Ourselves to those Books which are acknowledged by All to have been *then* written? Shall we not take that *Original* Faith more securely from the *Councils* of *Grave* and *Good* Men, met together, perhaps *Hundreds*, of Years afterwards, for the settling that *Faith*; or from the Writings of particular ancient *Doctors?* To which it must be answered, That the Judgment of These ought to have its *due Weight* with All who can come to find out what that Judgment was: that but its *due Weight* is only such as it ought to have, after it shall be compared with the Declarations of the *first Writings*, to which it almost always professes to conform; and into which, at last, all the Weight must be resolved: That the Wisest and Greatest of these Men, supposing them uncapable of deceiving Others, yet were very capable of being deceived Themselves: That they very often differ from one another, and sometimes from themselves; and that They cannot give so good an Account of

the *Faith* contained in the *Original Books*, as the *Books Themſelves* which contain it. SERM. II.

The *Queſtion* now before Us may be ſoon and effectually reſolved by aſking, Which is the beſt and ſecureſt Way of knowing exactly what the Doctrine of *any particular* Church, ſuppoſe the *Church* of *England*, delivered at the Time of the *Reformation?* Whether by conſulting the Writings of particular Divines, many Years *after* that Period; or Any Aſſembly of them at this Diſtance; or from the *Authentic Acts*, and Declarations, and *Sermons*, made and recorded at the very Time We are enquiring after; and explained *by* all the Helps from *Hiſtory* and *contemporary Writings*, which we can procure? For this *Inſtance* is very proper to clear up what I have been ſaying, as it will prove to Us, beyond all Contradiction, That the Doctrine, even of a particular Church; and a Doctrine recorded and ſet down in as accurate a Manner, as was thought neceſſary for the avoiding Diverſity of Opinions; *That* even ſuch a Doctrine may, in *Fifty Years* time, come to undergo ſome *Alterations*; and, in a few Years more, to be entirely changed, in the Writings and Diſcourſes of moſt of the Members of the ſame Church. I mean particularly the Points of Doctrine, called the *Five Points*, relating to *Juſtification*, and God's Decrees,

SERM. II.

Decrees, and the like: which were at firſt eſteemed as *Fundamental*, and even *Eſſential*, to the Church of *Chriſt*, as any others can be; And yet have been at length much changed by gradual Alterations. For, as the Writers and Explainers were *Many*, This Number naturally, in a very few Years, produced a very remarkable Variation from what was once ſettled; Every one who writes unavoidably uſing his own Style, and Manner of Expreſſion, which often alone begins the Change; and perhaps, in ſome Caſes, his own *Scheme* of *Philoſophy* which, introduced into *Religion*, very much affects the Scheme of *Doctrine* to be explained; and his own Judgment in interpreting and commenting upon the *Words already* fixed; which carries forward the ſame Change. — And if This be applied to the Firſt Chriſtian Writers, after the *Apoſtles* were departed; it will prove that, as their *Language*, and *Philoſophy*, were various; and, as they were naturally led by theſe to differ from one another, in what they profeſſed to explain and ſettle; great *Variations* from the *Original* Doctrine, might eaſily, by degrees, creep into the *Doctrines delivered by* Them; and therefore, that nothing remains to Us, firm and ſtable in Points of *Faith*, but what is recorded in the *Firſt Original* Books themſelves, as the *Faith*

Faith once delivered by *Chriſt*, and his *Apoſtles*. SERM. II.

The *Proteſtant* Rule, therefore, remains true and righteous, notwithſtanding the Attempts of many to weaken and confound it. To find out what that *Faith* was, which was *once delivered to the Saints*, as neceſſary for all *Chriſtians*, there is no other Method for a *Chriſtian*, at this Diſtance, to take, but to ſearch thoſe Books in which it was at firſt *delivered*. And the Rule for his Direction in that Enquiry is, That every thing neceſſary to be believed by Him, conſidered as a *Chriſtian*, is in thoſe Books not left to be gathered by *Conſequences*, or *Implications*; but declared expreſly to be neceſſary to his obtaining the Favour of God promiſed to *Chriſtians*. Theſe are the Points he is to attend to, whilſt he is ſearching after what is the *Faith* abſolutely neceſſary to *Him*, as a *Chriſtian*. For no one can poſſibly think, that every thing *abſolutely neceſſary* is not, in the *Goſpel Revelation*, expreſly proclaimed *to be ſo:* The Suppoſition of which will make it a very uſeleſs, or, at leaſt, a very imperfect *Rule*; or, rather, *no Rule* at all.

The Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God will be manifeſt from this *Rule*; becauſe the *Points*, *expreſly* declared, in expreſs Words, to be *neceſſary*, will be found to be few, and not

SERM. II.

surrounded with that *Confusion* and *Darkness* which Human Explications and Additions have brought in by way of *Light*. For, as the *Wisdom of Men is Foolishness with God*; so is the *Light* of *Men*, who would be wise, in Matters of *Revelation* alone, above what is written, *Darkness* with God. To proceed,

As the *Sense*, or Meaning of the Declarations of this kind, in the *New Testament*, is to be the Matter of *Christian Faith*; the only *Rule* is, That in order to find out the *Faith once delivered*, we must all endeavour, to the utmost of our Power, to find out the true *Sense* of those Passages, in which any thing is declared necessary to be believed, in order to our Salvation; and to this Purpose, must make use of our own Understandings, and form the best Judgment we ourselves can. I know of no other *Rule*, but this, given by Almighty GOD, for the Direction both of the *Learned*, and of the *Unlearned*. And if *He* has left no other Guide, no other ought to be imposed upon the World, by way of *Emendation* to the *Rule* of *Heaven*. As to the *Learned*; it is generally allowed, that This may be a good Rule for Them. But with relation to the *Unlearned*, great Outcries are made upon their *Frailty*, their *Ignorance*, their frequent *Errors*; and the like. Whereas, if *Frailties*

and *Errors* be real *Objections*; they lye as much againſt its being a *Rule* for the *Learned* themſelves; who have, in all Ages of the *Church*, been the chief Fountains, both of real and reputed *Schiſms* and *Hereſies*. It muſt, therefore, ſtill be the *Rule*, not only for the *Learned*, but even for the *Unlearned*. And, if it be found true, that the *Points*, declared neceſſary to Salvation, are, at leaſt, as well and plainly expreſſed in the *Words* of the *New Teſtament*, as any Man, or Collection of Men, can now expreſs them; and that, in theſe Points, *expreſly* declared to be *Neceſſary*, all *Tranſlations* agree; and that, in the Scripture *Words*, expreſſing them, all *Learned* Men, of all Parties, agree; Theſe muſt amount to a moral Certainty to act upon, in ſuch a *Caſe*: eſpecially when it is added, That it has not pleaſed God to ſettle any other Rule for their Guidance. When St. *Peter* complained that the *Unlearned*, and *Unſtable*, in thoſe early Days, wreſted the other *Scriptures*, as well as ſome Words of St. *Paul*, to *their own Deſtruction*; this could not be meant of the *Unlearned*, in our modern Senſe of that Word; but probably pointed out Thoſe *Bad Chriſtians*, who, *not having learnt* the true Nature of their Religion, neglected the *plain* neceſſary Points delivered, and diſtorted ſome *obſcure*

SERM. II.

SERM. II.

Paſſages to wicked Purpoſes, in their Practice. But whatever He meant; He himſelf propoſed no Method of *Cure* for this *Evil*, but the *Warning* He gives of it, and the *Care* which He teaches all to take, againſt being ſeduced by ſuch Errors of the *Wicked*; and the *Advice* he adds to *increaſe* in the *Knowledge* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Pet. iii. 16, 17, 18.

We may, therefore, go on to obſerve, that, as it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that any Man can be *ſaved* by the *Faith* of *Another*; or by any *Belief*, but what is truly *his own*; ſo, there is no poſſible Method of having a *Faith* of his own, properly ſo called, without building it entirely upon what appears right to his own Judgment, ſuch as it is, after his beſt *Endeavours* for Information; and his ſincereſt Care to find out what GOD requires in the Goſpel. If he reſts his Hopes of Heaven upon his profeſſing to *believe*, as *another* Man, or Body of Men, profeſs to believe; in the *firſt* place, He does not know whether They themſelves *believe*, or only pretend to believe, what they lay upon Others to *profeſs*; and in the *next* place, it is certain, He really, in this Method, believes nothing by any *Faith* of his own; but only thinks He believes, becauſe he is pleaſed to take certain Points upon Truſt; and to be ſure that ſomething is right, of which He himſelf

himſelf knows nothing, becauſe Another, whom he deputes to think for him, tells him that it is ſo; or rather, that it ought to be ſo profeſſed. How great a *Deluſion* is this, for any Man to imagine that he can be made acceptable to God by a *Faith* which is *not his own*, but the *ſuppoſed Faith* of Others? SERM. II.

Let the Shame of ſuch an *Abſurdity* be left to *That* Church alone, which is forced to add *Abſurdity* to *Abſurdity*, in order to make the Heap *conſiſtent*; and which alone may, with any Decency, teach that *Chriſtians* are ſaved only by Believing (that is, thinking they believe) as the *Church* believes. For, after having taught, that Men may be ſaved by the *Good Works* of *Others*, tho' they have none of their own; It may conſiſtently add to this, another comfortable Point, that Men may be ſaved by the *Faith* of *Others*, though they have none of their own: Eſpecially having, in its *Syſtem* of *Faith*, ſo many *Articles* of *Supererogation*; as well as, in its *Saints*, ſo many *Works* of *Supererogation*. But let not *Proteſtants* follow them, tho' at never ſo great a Diſtance, in this *Deſtruction* of *Chriſtianity*. No one can have a *Faith* of his own, who makes not uſe of his own *Judgment*, in fixing in his Mind what God calls upon him to believe, as neceſſary to a *Chriſtian*. And *This* is the Reaſon

SERM. II.

why he is to make uſe of *his own* Judgment; not becauſe it is better than the Judgment of Others; nor becauſe he himſelf imagines, or thinks, it to be better: but becauſe it is *his own.* It is the *beſt* God has been pleaſed to give him; and, being his own, it is therefore, his Guide in this Matter, without which he can have *no Faith* of *his* own; and conſequently, without the Exerciſe of which, He cannot pleaſe God. So far is this from being the *Arrogance*, or *Pride*, of ſetting up His own Judgment againſt his *Superiors*, in a bad Senſe; or vaunting it as better than *Theirs*; that it is his Duty, his abſolute Duty, to make uſe of it, in the Caſe of the *Faith* once *delivered to the Saints.* Let what will be the Conſequence of this, it is the only Rule God has left him to walk by. Without this, he will be ſo far from contending for the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, that he cannot know ſo much as what it is; nor have *any Faith* at all, to *contend for.*

Add to this, what muſt always be remarked, that Almighty GOD can guard againſt all the ſuppoſed bad Conſequences of *his own* Rule, better than all the Wiſdom of this World put together: Which, we ſee in the preſent Caſe, never fails, in attempting to cure the *Evils* of ſuch a reaſonable *Rule*, to *kill* and deſtroy that *real*

real Faith, which this Method alone can procure. And not only this; but He, who is alſo the great Judge of the World, can and will make all thoſe Allowances for the Errors of his imperfect Creatures, in their ſincere following of *his own Rule*; which He will not be at all obliged to make, for the miſerable and wicked Conſequences of ſetting up a *Rule* of *their own*, in Contradiction to *His*. But I come now,

III. To conclude with a few *Obſervations*, naturally ariſing from what has been ſaid. And

1. I ſhall only juſt obſerve, as I paſs, if this *Text* ſhould be found, at laſt, to refer to the *Conteſts* of *Chriſtians*, ſuffering Themſelves for what They themſelves believe; how greatly, and how fatally, are They miſtaken, who apply it to the making *Others* ſuffer, in any Inſtance, ſmall or great, for what thoſe *Others* do *not* believe? Thus transferring, according to the vicious Self-love of Human Nature, the irkſome Duty of undergoing the fiery *Trial*, or *Conteſt*, themſelves, for what They themſelves believe; to *Others*, whom They often bring to Diſtreſs and Suffering, for the ſake of *not believing* exactly the ſame? But ſuppoſing the Words to relate to

SERM. II.

the *Conteſts* of profeſſed *Chriſtians*, in Matters of *Faith* one againſt another,

2. It is evident, that the *Laws* of the *Chriſtian Conteſt* muſt be the *Laws* of the *Chriſtian Religion*; and that whoever tranſgreſſes one of theſe Laws, in this Combat, forfeits all Right to the Reward of a *Conqueror*. And this at once cuts off all Pretence from *Chriſtians*, under Colour of ſecuring or ſettling the *Faith*, of contending for it, or any ſuppoſed Part of it, by the *Wrath of Man*; or, even the Anger and Paſſion of Words; much more, by the *Terror* of *Corporal Puniſhments*: In a word, by any Method, but what is preſcribed in the *Goſpel* itſelf.

3. Since we have, by God's Providence, thoſe *Antient Books*, in which our Lord himſelf, his *Apoſtles*, and their *Companions*, have compleatly laid down what is of neceſſity to be believed; how injurious is it to repreſent Thoſe as *Innovators*, whoſe whole Deſign is to bring *Chriſtians* to ſearch out their *Faith* in thoſe Books? The *Faith*, which is there recorded, muſt be the moſt *antient* Faith: And, therefore, cannot poſſibly lye under the Imputation of *Novelty*. The *Additions* to it of *After-ages*, let them be as near as poſſible to thoſe *Firſt Writings*, yet ſtill are truly *Innovations* and *Novelties*, with reſpect to what

what was ſettled *before* them. Neither can any Length of Time, or any Number of Ages, give them the true *Antiquity* of *Chriſt's Religion*, or ever make them any other than *Novelties*, and *Innovations*. And whoever refer *Chriſtians* to any Writings, or Tranſactions, of Ages later than the *Apoſtolical*; unleſs it be as they may refer them to any Writings of the preſent Age, by way of Helps and Aſſiſtances, to find out the Meaning of what was *before delivered*; Theſe are properly the Introducers and Encouragers of *Innovations* in the *Chriſtian Religion*. But, SERM. II.

4. I cannot but obſerve, that, in order to preſerve this *Faith*, *delivered* in thoſe Antient Books, entire; the moſt ſecure, as well as the moſt Chriſtian way, is to preſerve the *Old Words*, and the *Old Language*, of thoſe Books, as unvaried and unchanged, as poſſible. The Reaſon is plain, becauſe They are the *Words* in which it pleaſed God it ſhould at firſt be *delivered*. And therefore, tho' many Perſons may miſtake in their different Apprehenſions concerning the Senſe of theſe Words; yet, we may be ſure, whilſt we retain theſe Words, that we retain what God himſelf has ſeen fit ſhould be *delivered* and tranſmitted to us, as the beſt Conveyance, all things conſidered, of the *Faith* required of Us. This I mean particularly with regard

SERM. II.

regard to thoſe *Articles* of *Belief*, which are properly *Chriſtian*; becauſe *Theſe* could not be ſo much as known to *Chriſtians* at all, but by the Declarations of the very *Author* and *Finiſher* of their *Faith*. It may be otherwiſe in the Point of *Worſhip*; and in the *Moral Rules* of *Practiſe*; in which Reaſon, or Natural Religion, may be neceſſarily applied, to ſettle the true Meaning and Extent of what is ſaid. But as to *Points* of *Faith*, peculiar to *Chriſtians*, I do not ſee how any Rule can be better than what I am now laying down: Nor any thing more reaſonable, than that All ſhould be accounted *Chriſtians*, who profeſs the *Points*, properly called the *Points* of *Chriſtian Faith*, in the *Words* in which They were delivered, and now are expreſſed, in the *New Teſtament* itſelf.

I am ſenſible, it is ſaid, that Hereſies aroſe, *i. e.* that *ſome* Men differed from *Others*, in their Notions founded upon theſe *Words:* And therefore, it was thought neceſſary to change the *Language*, in which this *Faith* was delivered to us. But did not Almighty God foreſee this great Evil, of Difference of Opinion, in the Points in which Men have ſince differed? He did: And yet He left our *Faith* delivered in thoſe *Words*, which are ſaid to have been the Foundation of thoſe Differences. Or, are We wiſer than God, in chuſing more effectual Words

Words to this Purpoſe, than thoſe in which the Perſons commiſſioned by Him delivered His Will? Who will ſay this? Or did He appoint that, in After-ages, the *Antient Language* ſhould be totally changed, for a *New Syſtem* of Words; and that the *Faith* of *Chriſtians* ſhould be delivered over again in *Novel Expreſſions?* If he did, let a plain Text be produced; and not ſuch a conſequential Argument, of the Uſefulneſs or Fitneſs of it, as may be urged, even for the *Popiſh Infallibility* itſelf. SERM. II.

But when *New Language* has, by the Help of ſuch an Argument, been introduced; what has been the Effect? Good and Honeſt Men alone have been the Sufferers. *Theſe* have been cramped and diſturbed, and, perhaps, deprived of all worldly Privileges, by it. The Diſhoneſt, and Unthinking, and Slaviſh, Minds have always rejoiced in ſuch an earthly *Peculium*, as this Method ſecures to them. And, if we conſult Experience, the *New Words* invented for the Security of the *Faith*, with regard both to *Learned* and *Unlearned*, have been generally, ſuch as have increaſed, and not diminiſhed, *Hereſies* and *Schiſms:* Hard Terms, metaphyſical and abſtruſe Expreſſions, ambiguous themſelves, tho' introduced under Pretenſe of avoiding Ambiguity; utterly *unintelligible* by the *Unlearned*, who yet are to be ſaved by *Faith* as well as others; and eternally

SERM. II.

eternally *debated* amongſt the *Learned*. And thus it will always be, when Men become wiſer, *in their own Conceit*, to prevent Evils, than God himſelf. They firſt go out of the Road which He has chalked out: and then they find, at the End, that they cauſe a great deal of Evil, without preventing any: And only invent Inſtruments to *diſtreſs*, but not to *convince*, any Man of his real, or ſuppoſed, *Errors*.

Laſtly, By contending for the *Faith*, as it was once delivered to the *Saints* in the *New Teſtament*, we ſhall only preſs upon Men the receiving what it is has pleaſed God to deliver; but ſhall avoid that *Great Evil* of enforcing upon *Them* the *Conſequences*, which *We* ourſelves ſee, or think we ſee, to follow from the Doctrines firſt delivered. It derogates from the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God to think that He has not provided, that all Points truly *fundamental*, ſhould be delivered in *expreſs* Terms, and, in ſo many Words, declared to be *fundamental*. And this muſt ever be a great Prejudice againſt any Point enforced by *Men*, as *fundamental*; to find them obliged to deduce it by a *Conſequential* Arguing from their own Senſe of the Words of Scripture.

The juſt Conſequences from any *Truth*, are, certainly, equally true with that *Truth*, from which they follow. And it is as certain, that

to

to *Him* who ſees them to follow, or thinks he ſees them, they are as *Truths*; and may juſtly be maintained as ſuch. But they are not ſo to Others, who ſee them not in the ſame Light. Nor can they be made neceſſary to be believed by Others, 'till theſe Others themſelves diſcover their *Relation* to the *Primitive Truths* of Religion: And then they will, of Courſe, and Neceſſity, believe them. But to make the Conſequences, ſuppoſed or real, of *fundamental Doctrines*, to be *fundamental* to *All Chriſtians*, and neceſſary to be *explicitly* believed, is firſt to create a *new Rule of Faith*; and then it is to ſuppoſe, as a Truth, what is the greateſt Falſhood in Fact, that all Men's Capacities and Underſtandings are equally fitted to ſee the ſame *Deductions*, and the ſame *Conſequences*, which Some may ſee. SERM. II.

And this is a great Objection againſt all *Innovations* of *Language* in fundamental Points; That almoſt all thoſe *New* Words and Phraſes, upon which the greateſt Streſs has been laid, are ſeen to be framed from *Conſequential Arguings:* not to be merely *other* Words for the *Old* Words, but to be framed upon a particular *Interpretation* of thoſe *Old Words*, and by a Train of Conſequences d awn from the antient Expreſſions, explained in a particular Manner.

In

SERM. II.

In fine, the *Faith* to be *contended* for, was compleatly delivered, *before* it was to be contended for. The *Direction* of *Other* Men's *Faith* is not, *our* Capacity of seeing Consequences, or *our* Skill in Interpreting; but the plain Declarations of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*. To *contend* for it, in the very Form in which it was at first *once delivered*, is a Glory to a *Christian*. It is to follow God, by contending for it in a Method surrounded with those Inconveniencies only, with which it has pleased Him to leave it surrounded, for the Trial of the Sincerity of his Servants. To contend for the *Faith*, as it has been *over* and *over again* delivered by *Men*, has, at least, this Evil in it, that it is a forsaking the Method *chosen* by Almighty God, as insufficient; and chusing *Another*, which, by being effectually pursued, has been already seen to be the Inlet of All *Superstition*, all *Absurdity*, and all *Persecution*, into the *Church* of *Christ*: from the *Reproach*, and *Guilt*, and *Burthen*, of which, may it please God at length to deliver it, through his Son *Jesus Christ*, our Lord!

Of Judging One Another.

SERMON III.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 18, 1721-2.

ROMANS xiv. 4.

Who art Thou that judgeſt another Man's Servant? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth, or falleth.

SERM. III.

WE find, in this Chapter, the *Apoſtle*, with his uſual Zeal, oppoſing that Spirit of Cenſuring and Judging One Another, which very early ſhewed itſelf in the *Chriſtian Church*; and, at the ſame time, diſplaying before the Eyes of all *Chriſtians*, in his own Example, the greateſt Inſtance of Temper and good Conduct in this reſpect. He knew the Genius of the *Chriſtian Religion* perfectly well. He was acquainted where the *Truth* lay, in thoſe Differences which raiſed this Spirit of Cenſure in his Time. He is free to declare his own Judgment, on *one* ſide of the Queſtion. But tho' He had all the Light and

SERM. III.

and Authority of an *Apoſtle*, to enforce an *Agreement* with Himſelf; yet, He choſe rather to plead, even with Warmth, for Condeſcenſion, and Love, and Regard, to Thoſe who were not of his Mind; and whom He knew to be in an Error.

The things which gave ground for this ill Behaviour of *Chriſtians* to one another, were of the ſmalleſt Moment; *Some* thinking to pleaſe their common Maſter, amongſt other greater Matters, with obſerving ſeveral *Jewiſh* and trivial Rules with reſpect to Eating, and Holydays, and the like; *Others*, thinking this a Weakneſs, and that *Chriſtians* were freed from ſuch like Burthens: But *neither* contented with enjoying their own Judgments; but *One* Sort cenſuring and judging the *Other*, for the Obſervation, or Neglect, of ſuch Matters, juſt according as They themſelves thought fit either to obſerve, or neglect, them. Here it was fit, therefore, for the *Apoſtle* to interpoſe; and ſhew the Nature and Temper of *Chriſtianity*, with reſpect to the Caſe before Him. But, alas! This evil Spirit of *Cenſure*, and *Judging*, was not then lay'd, even by the *Authority* of an *Apoſtle*: nor by the *Argument* taken from that *Day of the Lord*, which He placed in their view, and from that *Judgment-ſeat* of *Chriſt*, their com-

mon Master, to which He directed their Minds; that they might not dare to raise *Judgment-seats* of their own, in order to try and condemn One Another. SERM. III.

Too much of this Spirit was still seen in the earliest Ages of the *Church*, and too much remains to this Day: to which there is no other Remedy to be applied, but the same Remedy prescribed in the *Gospel*; the same Rules laid down by St. *Paul*; and the same Argument, which he thought fit to make use of. For, *Christianity* was reveled from Heaven, not only to lead Men into all necessary *Truth*; but into the Paths of *Humanity* towards Those who are really in *Error*, or supposed to be so: to conquer the Tempers and Passions of Men; to teach them not to make their own Notions the Measure of other Men's Conduct; to habituate them to such a forbearing, complying, yielding, and tender Disposition, as may be a moving Argument to their great and supreme Judge, at last, to forgive and acknowledge Them.

There being, therefore, so much of the contrary Spirit to this, still reigning amongst *Christians*, tho' not one Grain of it in *Christianity* itself, it must be very proper to consider the Argument, here made use of by St. *Paul*; and see, if it will not help to cure that Dis-

SERM. III.

temper of Mind, by which many *Chriſtians* ſtill rave againſt Others, with all the Marks and Expreſſions of Enmity and Reproach; and often ſhut the Gates of the *Church*, and of *Heaven* itſelf, againſt them; declare them unacceptable to God; and condemn them, with as much Authority and Solemnity, as if They were appointed by God to be their final Judges. *Who art Thou*, ſays the Apoſtle, *that judgeſt the Servant of Another? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth, or falleth.* From which Words, the *following Particulars* may properly be recommended to *Chriſtians*, as Arguments againſt this Spirit of *Cenſure* and *Judging*.

I. That we are not qualified thus to ſit in *Judgment* upon One Another.

II. That it is not the Province of *Us*, who are but *fellow Servants* to the ſame *Maſter*.

III. That it is a Province peculiarly reſerved to *Himſelf*, by that common Maſter whom We all ſerve. To which let us add, what is implied to the ſame Purpoſe, ver. 10. of this *Chapter*,

IV. That it is our Buſineſs to prepare for the final Judgment of Ourſelves, and not to be found judging Others. *For we ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt:* And, ver. 12.

Every One of Us shall give an Account of Himself *to* God. SERM. III.

I. We are not at all qualified thus to sit in *Judgment* upon One Another. For, *Who art Thou that judgest Another*, but a weak, prejudiced, fallible Man thyself; and, consequently, not at all qualified for such an Office? This is, indeed, a strong Consideration, against our assuming to Ourselves the Office of Judging Others, That *We* are void of all those Qualifications, which are requisite to our *judging aright* about Them; and particularly, with regard to their Religious Conduct; in which we are most apt to exercise this Dominion over them. For, being Ourselves *weak* and *fallible*, and often passionate Men, We are so easily imposed upon and misled; so insensibly and even undesignedly prejudiced; so little acquainted with the first Springs of Action in Others; so wholly Strangers to the inward Thoughts and Designs of their Hearts; so unable to know all the several Circumstances that ought to be thrown into the Balance; (their Education; the unavoidable Bias put upon their Minds, before They were able to think for Themselves; their natural Tempers; their Inducements and Motives;) and so unwilling to make all those necessary and due

SERM. III.

Allowances, which We always expect in our own Caſe: That, on all theſe, and many more Accounts, who would venture ſo far out of his Depth, as to declare, or inſinuate, any thing concerning not only the evil Deſigns of *Others*, but their Unacceptableneſs to God; who have no other apparent and viſible Mark of wilful *Evil* upon Them, but their differing, in ſome Opinions, or circumſtantial Practiſes, from Ourſelves?

And there is one great Proof of our being unqualified, either by the Defects of our Wills, or our Underſtandings, to ſet up Ourſelves for *Judges* over *Others*; that it is our conſtant Way, in this unreaſonable Procedure, to *judge* Others by our own Notions, and our own Opinions, *i. e.* by our own Powers and Capacities: Whereas GOD Almighty, the great Searcher of all Hearts, will not judge one Man by the Notions of Another, but by the Man's own Notions, and his own Capacity. And He is infallible in his *Deciſions*, and unerring in his Knowledge, of what is Truth. *We* condemn *Others*, not becauſe they are not conſiſtent with Themſelves; not becauſe they ſpeak, or act, in Religion, againſt *their own* Conſciences; but becauſe they agree not with Us, or contradict our Opinions. A Procedure, which all Men ſo conſtantly judge to be unjuſtifiable,

SERM. III.

juſtifiable, when it comes to their own Turn to be ſo uſed, that They think Nothing more unreaſonable; or more unjuſt. Did we truly value and regard that Simplicity, and Integrity of Mind, without which *Truth* itſelf is but an accidental Thing, and of no Value to the Poſſeſſor; or had We a true Chriſtian Love of our Neighbour; We ſhould take a Delight in every Mark of apparent *Honeſty*, which We meet with, even where We meet with the greateſt Difference of Opinion at the ſame Time: and our great Concern would be *then* expreſſed, when We find ſo much of what Others perhaps think, or call, *Truth*, taken up without Examination; repoſited in ill-tempered Minds; void of all other Recommendation, but an accidental Agreement with Ourſelves. But whilſt our Paſſions are as ſtrong, as our Underſtandings are weak; and whilſt We are as unwilling to treat any thing well, but what is agreeable to our own Notions, as We are unable to ſee and know what is requiſite to our making a due Judgment of *Others*; We ought to acknowledge Ourſelves unfit for the Office; and to keep at as great a Diſtance from it, as poſſible. But,

II. As We are not at all qualified for the Work of judging Others; ſo it is wholly

SERM. III.

out of our Province, who are Ourſelves but *fellow Servants* with Thoſe whom We thus treat as if We were their *Lords* and *Maſters*. *Who art Thou that judgeſt the Servant of Another?* One in the ſame Rank and Order with Thyſelf? His being of another Mind, or differing in Judgment, about ſome Things relating to his Maſter's Service, in which honeſt Men may differ; is no real Injury to Us; it imports no Calamity; threatens Us with no Ruine: and therefore, We have not the Pretenſe of *Self-Defenſe*, or *Self-Preſervation*, to take upon Us the Province. If *theſe* have any thing to do in this Matter, it muſt be to induce Us to act a quite contrary Part. For Nothing will ſo reconcile Others to Us; Nothing will ſo meliorate and ſoften their Diſpoſitions towards Ourſelves; Nothing will ſo defend Us from thoſe Cenſures and Judgments, which are ſo uneaſy to Us, when they come to be our own Lot; as our not cenſuring and judging *Them*. For *They* have as much Right to do it to *Us*, as We have to *Them*. *We* differ as much from *Them*, as *They* do from *Us*. *They* are as tenacious of what they believe, as *We* are of our own Faith: and think it as ſacred, and as important, as We can think our own: and, as far as We can know, are as fully perſuaded, that it has all the Marks of *Truth* upon it.

We

We ſee, therefore, Our great Buſineſs is, with Honeſty and Integrity, to ſerve our own Maſter. If we ſhould think it too much for our Fellow Servants, to interrupt and moleſt *Us*, in what We are perſuaded is for his Service, or the Propagation of what He approves; and eſteem *them* much out of their Province in ſuch a Behaviour; let Us learn that We are equally out of *our* Province, when We, in the ſame Manner, diſturb and vex our *Fellow Servants*, with our ſevere *Cenſures*, and Judgments. SERM. III.

III. It is to be particularly conſidered, that this is the Province reſerved to *Himſelf*, by that common Maſter whom We all ſerve. *Who art Thou that judgeſt another's Servant? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth, or falleth*; that *Maſter* whom he ſerveth, whoſe Diſciple he is, who is to be his *Judge*; and whoſe peculiar Office it is to determine concerning the Behaviour of his Servants, from Multitudes of Circumſtances, which He alone can and does know. To *Him* the laſt Appeal is juſtly made. He is qualified for the Office, being perfectly knowing, wiſe, and good; perfectly free from all Bias and Prejudice; fully acquainted with every Particular neceſſary to the forming a right Judgment; and fully diſpoſed to make all

SERM. III.

fitting and reaſonable Allowances, for his *Creatures* and *Servants*; and none, but ſuch as are ſo. And this Office peculiarly belongs to Him, as he Himſelf has declared; He being the Maſter, who will call every individual Servant to give up his own Account; to be judged according to his own Capacity, his own Talents; his own Opportunities; and not according to thoſe of other Men, or according to the Humours and Paſſions of Others of his Fellow Servants. And this being declared to be the Province of GOD himſelf, in order to deter Us from meddling with it; how ſhould it affect Us to conſider, that whatever raſh, haſty, ungrounded, prejudiced, uncandid, *Judgment*, We paſs upon our Neighbour, for what perhaps, he, in the Simplicity of his Heart, believes to be Service to God, and to *Chriſt:* We invade the Province of God; uſurp his Dominion; erect Ourſelves into Gods over our Brethren; and, like the Man of Sin, exalt Ourſelves to a Dignity and Office which is the ſacred Prerogative of God himſelf, who alone knoweth the Hearts of Men.

IV. I obſerved that the *Apoſtle* (in the 10th Verſe of this Chapter) puts *Chriſtians* in Mind, in order to remove their Thoughts from judging

ing One Another, that *We ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*, and, in the 12th Verſe, that *We ſhall every One give an Account of himſelf to God:* plainly recommending it to our Thoughts, that We have enough to do to prepare for *our own Judgment*, at that great and ſolemn Day; without troubling Ourſelves with the cenſuring and judging Others. And, indeed, what greater Argument can there be? For, Who, that conſiders that there is a *Day* coming, when he ſhall himſelf appear before an All-knowing Judge, to be condemned or acquitted, as his own Actions have been agreeable or diſagreeable to the Law of his Maſter; Who, that conſiders that he has ſuch a Concern upon his Hands, ſuch a Trial to expect, ſuch a Judgment to meet, will eaſily find Time to employ upon the Behaviour of a *Fellow-ſervant*, whoſe Maſter he is not, and for whom he is not to anſwer? SERM. III.

Nay, Who that thinks of that ſolemn Day, does not hope for, and ſtand in need of, the Mercy of God to himſelf, or, in other Words, the Favour and Candour of his Judge? And who that conſiders the Matter in this Light, can ſuffer in himſelf a Severity towards Others; whilſt he himſelf expects all reaſonable Allowances at the Hands of his great Judge?

If

SERM. III.

If Thou, Lord, ſhouldſt be extreme, to mark what is done amiſs; O Lord, who may abide it? And, ſince it is this Extremity of *Rigour* in our great Judge, that We have ſo much Reaſon to dread for Ourſelves; how can We expect any other, if We be, not only *extreme to mark what is* really *amiſs*, but to judge and cenſure in our Brethren, what, for ought We know, may be founded upon the ſtricteſt Honeſty and Integrity; the moſt lovely Qualities in the Eyes of God? *Who art Thou*, therefore, O Man, *who judgeſt the Servant of Another? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth.* Nay, *We ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*; and *every One of Us ſhall give Account of* himſelf, and *not* of *Others*, *to God.* Theſe are Words which, as We have ſeen, contain the moſt powerful Argument againſt all unreaſonable *Cenſure*, and *Judging*, of our Brethren; ſuch Arguments as human Minds, rightly informed, and rightly diſpoſed, cannot withſtand.

But what is it, then, it may be ſaid, that *Chriſtianity* allows in this Caſe? Doth it not permit Us to take any Notice of the *Errors* and *Miſtakes*, in the important Matters of Religion, in which We imagine Others to be? Have We no Part to act with reſpect to *Them?* And are they wholly to be overlooked by Us? I anſwer, by no Means. The *Goſpel* rather

rather obliges Us to take Notice of them, than the contrary. But this, in a Way very different from that in which generally *Chriſtians* have done it. Two Particulars I ſhall mention in anſwer to this Inquiry.

1ſt, We are not at all forbidden, but encouraged, to endeavour to remove all Prejudices, and Errors, out of the Minds of our *fellow Chriſtians*; and to recommend to them, with all Demonſtration both of good Argument and Chriſtian Temper, the Way of *Truth*, which We are perſuaded is right. Thus, in this very *Chapter*, St. *Paul* doth not ſcruple to declare his own Judgment, in Favour of that Notion, that there was no Sort of Meat but what it was lawful to partake of; and this, to be ſure, with Deſign to lead inſenſibly thoſe *Chriſtians*, who were troubled with the contrary Scruple, into a true Notion of this Matter; that they might be rid of a falſe Notion in their Judgments, and a great Burthen in their Practice. And, without doubt, He would not have ſcrupled to have argued the Point more largely with any who were of another Mind, upon any juſt Occaſion. Nor is there the leaſt Reaſon to be given from *Chriſtianity*, or the Practice of the *Apoſtle*, why it ſhould not be allowable, and commendable, for any *Chriſtians* to endeavour to perſuade Others

SERM III.

Others of their Errors, even tho' they be not of the firſt Order, or of the moſt malignant Conſequence. But then,

2dly, After this is done in the moſt inoffenſive Way, all the reſt muſt be left to *Chriſtian Charity*; which never ſhines brighter, never diſplays its Glory more, than when it ſhews its Power amongſt thoſe of different Minds, and different Perſuaſions. St. *Paul*, in this Chapter, layeth down his own Judgment. And, tho' he was an *Apoſtle*, and had as juſt a Claim as poſſible, to be followed in that *Judgment*; yet He doth not immediately expect, that all thoſe *Chriſtians*, prejudiced and biaſſed the other Way, ſhould at once leave off their Practiſes, or correct their wrong *Judgments*, in a Matter which concerned not the Vitals of Religion; but thinks it moſt for the Honour of God, that *Charity* ſhould ſhew its Part in theſe Differences: and rather chuſes, that Humility and brotherly Kindneſs ſhould conquer Paſſion and perſonal Prejudice, than that they all ſhould preſently be obliged to have, or profeſs, the ſame Notions; or to conform themſelves to the Judgment of One Another. To love, and bear with, Thoſe who agree with Us in all Things, is but a low Pitch of Good-Nature and Virtue: I had almoſt ſaid, it is but ſacrificing to our own Pride;

and little better than loving *Ourſelves* over again in *Others*. But to bear with, and to be kind in our Opinions of, Thoſe who differ from Us, is to ſacrifice our Pride and Self-Complacence at the Altar of *Charity*: It is truly to love *Others*, who are ſo much the farther from being *Ourſelves*, as They are removed from Us in Judgment and Opinion about ſome Points. This is a Pitch of Virtue worthy of a *Chriſtian*, That he judges not the inviſible Ground of the Behaviour of *Others*; that, as GOD, for *Chriſt's* Sake, has forgiven *him*, and is ready to make all reaſonable Allowances for *him*, ſo is *he* ready to be candid in interpreting the Actions of *Others*; and to bear with all that Variety of Judgment which can poſſibly be accounted for, from that Variety of Tempers, Education, and Converſation, which is unavoidable in this State. SERM. III.

If any one now enquires after the ill Effects of the *contrary Temper*; it is enough to ſay, that it is the Beginning of all *Perſecution*: which is as directly oppoſite to the *Spirit* of the *Goſpel*, as any *Error* can be to *Truth*; and is, indeed, a much worſe Evil than all the Errors put together, which, in all Ages of the *Church*, have been ever pretended, or deſigned, to be cured by it. We may ſee, in the earlieſt Days of the *Church*, what *Evils* ſprang from

SERM. III.

from such small Beginnings, as some may account this mutual *Censure* and *Judging* to be; and how one Degree of Iniquity brought on another. In the *Apostles* Days, and even under their Eyes, the Scene began with mutual Censure and Condemnation in *Words* only. The Interposition of St. *Paul* with the *Christians* at *Rome*; We may hope, kept this Evil a while from breaking out into greater Violence. But some Years after the *Apostle's* Death, it shewed itself again, and particularly at *Rome*, the very Place to which He had writ his Advice; and in a Manner, enough to give all *Christians* Warning at what a Distance they should ever keep themselves from this Temper. I mean that very remarkable Instance of Violence, shewn by the Bishop of this very *City* of *Rome*, against *Another* Bishop, on no more important Occasion than That of his celebrating a *Festival*, on a *Day* different from That on which it was observed at *Rome:* and this *Violence* carried as far as Renouncing *All Communion* with his *Brother-Bishop*; and with a great Number of Other Churches which joined with Him.

This was before the *Powers* of this World were become *Christian*. As soon as That was the Case, This fiery Spirit brought the Secular Arm into its Aid: and by degrees, the Punishments

niſhments properly belonging to *Temporal* Affairs, were made the Inſtruments of the Rage of *Chriſtians* againſt one another. For human Paſſion ſeldom knows where to ſtop, when once the Mind is taken off from that mild, and gentle, and forbearing, Temper, which is ſo great a Part of the *Law* of *God*.

Happy had it been for the After-ages, if all *Chriſtians* had learnt, from ſuch Examples, not to depart from this moſt reaſonable Branch of his Law. But, however it has been hitherto; ſo many hundred Years Experience may, by this time, one would hope, teach the *Chriſtian* World, and the *Proteſtant* World eſpecially, to recollect itſelf. Invain has the Goſpel reached our Ears: Invain doth *That* attempt to root out Barbarity, Inhumanity, Violence, Perſecution, unleſs the Beginning be laid in our Tempers; unleſs we learn to be inwardly well-diſpoſed, and candid to one another. For indeed the *Contrary*, even in *Thought*, is no better than a *mental Perſecution* of our Neighbour, which, firſt expreſs'd in hard and angry Words only, ſeldom fails to end in open and avowed Acts of *external* Perſecution; whenever *Opportunity* adds *Power* to the *Wills* of Thoſe who indulge Themſelves in ſo unchriſtian a Diſpoſition.

Upon

SERM. III.

Upon the whole; If the tender Compaſſion of God to Us be any thing more than *Sound*; if We be ſenſible what *We* are Ourſelves, and what our *Neighbours* are to Us; if We have any Regard to that great common *Maſter* whom we all ſerve; if we ever think of that great *Tribunal* at which We muſt all appear: Let Us be induced by all theſe, to caſt out of our Thoughts, and Words, all that Cenſure and Judging of Others, which will only help to condemn Ourſelves: and let Us cultivate in our Breaſts that happy and god-like Temper of *Forbearance* and *Candour*, which will contribute ſo much to our inward Peace now, and to our final *Forgiveneſs*, and *Happineſs*, hereafter.

Of

Of the true Uſe of this World.

SERMON IV.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 21, 1724-5.

1 CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

And They that uſe this World, as not abuſing it: For the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away.

AFTER St. *Paul* had, in the former Part of this *Chapter*, given the *Corinthians* ſuch prudential Rules, relating to their Behaviour in the World, as the Circumſtances of *Chriſtians* at that Time required, He comes to ſum up what He chiefly intended by all that He had been ſaying. This He doth in the 29th, 30th, and 31ſt Verſes. Verſe 29. *But this I ſay, Brethren, the Time is ſhort. It remaineth that both they that have Wives, be as though they had none:* So our *Tranſlation* expreſſeth it. But it ſeems more agreeable to the *Original*, to connect the Parts of that Sentence, after this Manner. But, Brethren, this

SERM. IV. this is what I am ſaying, and inculcating upon you, (becauſe, as to what remaineth, the Time, or Opportunity, that will be afforded Us in this World, is very ſhort) This is, I ſay, what I am preſſing upon you, that they *that have Wives:* They that have Families to concern themſelves for, ſhould thus far be as though they had none, that They ſhould not ſuffer themſelves to be overwhelmed with worldly Cares, ſo as to forget the State they are in, as They are *Chriſtians:* Ver. 30. that They *that weep*, or are under any Affliction, ſhould be *as tho' they wept not*; ſhould behave themſelves under it, as Perſons who in a ſhort Time ſhall be releaſed from it: that They that *rejoice, ſhould be as tho' they rejoiced not*; They that enjoy the moſt proſperous Condition of Life, ſhould behave themſelves with Moderation, as Perſons under a Senſe of the Shortneſs of that Time which I am ſpeaking of: and *They that buy*, ſhould be *as* tho' They poſſeſſed not; ſhould behave themſelves only as Tenants for a very ſhort Space, not as laſting Poſſeſſors of what They purchaſe.

At the 31ſt Verſe, He ſums up, in a very comprehenſive Expreſſion, the Whole of what He means to preſs upon *Chriſtians* at that Time, with regard to all the *Goods* of this *World: viz.* that *all who uſe this World*, ſhould behave

behave themſelves, as *not abuſing it*; either, as not uſing it with too great an Intenſeneſs of Affection towards it; or, much more, as not uſing it, or any Portion of it, in any Manner, or for any Purpoſe, contrary to the Original Deſign of the Creator of all Things. Then the *Apoſtle* adds this Reaſon for what He ſaith, *for the Faſhion*, or *Figure*, *of this World paſſeth away*: That is, either the *World itſelf*; or the preſent *State* and *Condition* of Things in the World. This is all, according to the *Apoſtle*, to *paſs away*; or to be ſo entirely altered, as that the ſame Things, and Circumſtances of Things, can have no Place after that Alteration. SERM. IV.

In this *Paſſage*, indeed, the *Apoſtle* may be ſuppoſed to have had a principal View to that Scene of Perſecutions which was then coming upon true *Chriſtians*; and which ſhould alter, to them, the State of the World entirely: and likewiſe, to that total *Diſſolution* of the preſent Fabrick and Face of Things, which in thoſe *firſt* Days was certainly underſtood, and often ſpoken of, as a Matter juſt then coming, and very near at hand.

But, without any critical Examination of the preciſe Meaning of the Words, as They ſtand in this particular Place: and conſidering them in that more general Senſe which the

SERM. IV. firſt Sound of them may be ſuppoſed to raiſe in Us, as allowing an *Uſe* of the *World*, lawful and neceſſary; as condemning the *Abuſe* of it; and as urging a Reaſon againſt abuſing it, from the uncertain Condition of this World; it will be proper for Us to conſider,

I. What is meant by the *World*; and what is comprehended under this Word.

II. When it is that We *uſe* it, as it is our Praiſe and Duty to do. And,

III. What it is to *abuſe* it. And then to make a ſhort Reflexion upon the Argument here made uſe of, by the *Apoſtle*. And all, with Reference to Ourſelves, and the State of the World at preſent.

I. The *firſt* thing is to conſider what is meant by the *World*; and what is comprehended under this Word. And here it is moſt evident that by the *World*, we are to underſtand, whatever this World contains in it; whatever it can boaſt of as on any Account deſirable; and particularly, whatever there is in it, that Men are ſeen to think it moſt worth their while to purſue after, and to obtain. All this may be reduced to theſe *three*, *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleaſure*; the *three* great Maſters of the Affections, and Actions, of Thoſe who think moſt of this World.

SERM. IV.

Riches may well be mentioned in the firſt Place, becauſe they lead the way to worldly *Honour*, and worldly *Pleaſure*. They have it in their Power moſt commonly to procure whatever a Man may propoſe, or fancy to himſelf, as neceſſary to his Happineſs in this World: and, too often, to procure what ought to be the Reward of *Merit*, and Virtue alone. But then, as they ſeem frequently to be deſired, and ſought after, even for *their own* Sakes; I mean by the *Covetous*, who deſpiſe what is called *Honour*, and know no other *Pleaſure*, but that of having much of them in their Poſſeſſion: They may well claim a diſtinct Place by themſelves, as they are ſeen to ſtand for *themſelves*, and *all other* good Things too; to be not only *Riches*; but *Honour*, and *Pleaſure*, in the Opinion of Thoſe who ſet their Hearts upon them. But, as there are *Others* who are as fond of worldly *Honour* and *Grandeur*, as the moſt *Covetous* Man can be of his *Mony*; and *Others*, as tranſported with the Love of *Pleaſure*, as either of theſe can be with *their* Idols; and, as *Both* theſe latter can make *Riches* ſubſervient to the *Objects* of *their particular Deſires:* They may juſtly claim, every One of them, to be diſtinctly ſpoken of, on this Occaſion.

SERM. IV.

Nor is the Nature of this World, or of Man, so framed, as that We must suppose that *Riches*, *Honour*, or *Pleasure*, are not *good Things*; or, that all Desire of them, or Enjoyment of them, is sinful. Far from it. *This World* is our *Habitation* at present. It is our *House* of *Entertainment*, in our *Passage* to another. The three great *Entertainments* that it sets before Us, are *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleasure*. They cannot but be accounted *Goods* (till they are wilfully made *Evils*) by all who carry human Nature about them, and live in such a State as this is.

This being then the Nature of the *World*; and these being the *principal Goods* it pretends to; and of so great Consequence, as to be ever chiefly comprehended in the Name *World*; it is plain, that the *Use* of these, is the *Use* of the World; and the *Abuse* of these, the *Abuse* of the World: that, when We use *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleasure*, as we ought, then We *use the World without abusing it*; and that *then* We *abuse* the World, when We abuse the *Riches*, *Honours*, or *Pleasures*, of it. Let Us then,

II. In the *Second* Place, enquire, as I proposed, when it is that We *use* the *World*, that is the *Riches*, *Honours*, or *Pleasures* of it, as We ought; as it is our Praise, and Duty to do. The *first* Step of all is to use them *innocently*, so as not to be induced, by the Love of them,

them, to the Violation of *any* One Law of *God*; or of *Reaſon*, which is *His* Gift. The *ſecond* is to *uſe* them ſo as to make them the Inſtruments of much good, and of laſting Happineſs, to Ourſelves and Others. The *former* is ſomething: but it is the loweſt Degree of Virtue and Praiſe. It leads naturally to the *latter:* and without it, it can hardly be ſuppoſed; and, I believe, never is found. For He that doth not *uſe* the good Things of this World, ſo as to make them the Inſtruments of *Good* to himſelf, and of *Happineſs* to Others, is, I fear, always ſeen to make them the Means of *Evil* to Himſelf, and of *Unhappineſs* to Others: as, He that is ſeen to receive no Harm from them himſelf, and to be untouched by the Evil that comes from them too naturally, will likewiſe be ſeen to make them the Occaſions, and Inſtruments, of Good, and Happineſs to Others. Their Nature is ſuch, that, if they produce not Good to Ourſelves and Others, they can hardly avoid producing a great deal of Evil and Miſchief. SERM. IV.

The true uſe of *Riches* is firſt to be conſidered. And in what is it that They differ from the other common Dirt of this Earth, if they be not uſed ſo as to adminiſter the Conveniences and Neceſſaries of this Life to Ourſelves; and after that, to all about Us, to whom Our

SERM. IV.

Help can reach? When a Man is ſeen, out of a Sort of Madneſs of *Covetouſneſs*, to deny Himſelf the common Conveniences of Life, rather than break in upon his ſacred Store; He cannot be ſaid to *uſe* Riches, becauſe they lie untouched and unuſed, unleſs they are ſometimes handled and told over, with an unaccountable Satisfaction. But this is ſo very rare a Sort of *Covetouſneſs*, that it raiſeth the Aſtoniſhment of all, whenever it appears. There are *Few*, who will not make uſe of the *Riches* of this World, for their own Eaſe, and Convenience; but *Many*, who ſtop here, when they ſhould go much farther.

The next Thing is to conſider the Abundance that We enjoy; and how much of it can ſafely and ſecurely be ſpared, without breaking in upon our own Conveniences and Accommodations, or our own nearer Relations: and of this Abundance to impart to Thoſe who have it not in their Power to procure for themſelves the common Neceſſaries of Life without our Aſſiſtance. This is a noble Uſe of *Riches* in Truth; but not more noble, than it is reaſonable, and fitting. For what can We better, or more becomingly, do with thoſe Superfluities which ſurround Us? what Method can We take, to make them more effectually ſubſervient to our own Happineſs,

Happineſs, than to *uſe* them thus? What more manly Pleaſure, than to look upon every Thing human to be of Concern to Ourſelves? and every Thing that can happen to any *other* Men, to touch *Us* nearly, as *Men* alſo? What more rational Satisfaction, than to think of Multitudes made happy by Us? It is a Sort of approaching to Divinity; and a being, in the beſt Senſe poſſible to Us, *Partakers* of the *Divine Nature*; to make Ourſelves, under the ſupreme GOD, Aſſiſtants, Supporters, Benefactors, Preſervers, to all within our Reach. They that feel it, know that there cannot be a greater Pleaſure to a well-diſpoſed Mind, than this of adding to the Happineſs, or diminiſhing the Miſeries, of our Fellow-Creatures around Us. Nor can the Praiſe due to ſuch a beneficent *Uſe* of *Riches*, be detained from it. Every One applauds it, tho' every One will not imitate it. It conſtrains and commands the Voice of Mankind in it's Favour. And if it ſhould at any Time, by ſome ſtrange Accident, go without *that*; yet, it always recommends to the great Judge of the World. It makes *Us rich towards Him*; and makes *Him* condeſcend to be Our *Debtor*, on Account of Others, to whom our *Riches* are diſpenſed. SERM. IV.

It

SERM. IV.

It is *God*, the Great Diſpoſer of all Things, who makes *One* Man differ from *Another*. It is his *Providence* that gives or allows Succeſs to attend upon his Deſigns; that fills his Coffers, and makes his Abundance to overflow. What can this be for? Not merely for *his own* Happineſs, conſidered by himſelf, as ſeparated from the reſt of the World: for GOD ſees, what We do not always ſee, that the Happineſs of a Man, the preſent Happineſs, is ſo far from being certainly promoted by the *Abundance of what He poſſeſſeth*, that it is too commonly utterly deſtroyed, and confounded, by it. The plain Intent of this Favour is, that this *Abundance* ſhould be diſpenſed abroad, by the *Rich*; whom he makes his Stewards, when He makes them *Rich*, for the Support of the Poor and Diſtreſſed under them.

This is the *Uſe*, the only *Uſe*, that Almighty GOD can deſign ſhall be made of the Abundance and Superfluities of *rich* Men: and when they uſe their Riches after this Manner, then do they truly *uſe* the *World*, as far as the *Riches* of it are concerned, not only *as not abuſing it*; but as God, and Reaſon, and the End of Human Society, require.

The next Thing is the true Uſe of the *Honours* of this World. Now, the whole End propoſed in them, by the very Nature of the Thing,

Thing, being only to preſerve and keep up ſuch Diſtinctions of Order amongſt the Members of the ſame Body, as ſeems neceſſary for the better carrying forward the Ends of Human Society; it is certain that, when they are *uſed*, by the Poſſeſſors of them, with regard only to that Diſtinction, they are then uſed, as the Nature and End of them require. When Humility and Affability accompany them; when the *Power* that is generally joined with them, ſhews itſelf in *Beneficence* and *Charity*; when the Mind of the Poſſeſſor views them with that *Lowlineſs*, and *Moderation*, which are the conſtant Companions of a great Spirit; and actuates the whole Behaviour ſo, that all that is decent and regular ſeems the Effect of that Greatneſs, and to be dictated by that Diſtinction, which they give a Man; engaging him to excel in *Virtue*, as well as the outward Appearances of *Honour*; *then*, We may truly ſay, that He *uſeth* this World, as far as the *Honours* of this World are concerned, as He ought to do; as the Nature of them, or, as Reaſon, and God, require. SERM. IV.

The *third* of thoſe *Good Things* which this World principally boaſts of, is *Pleaſure*: a fatal *Evil*, in the End, to Many! but what may be uſed ſo as to bring no Guilt along with it.

SERM. IV.

it. For *Pleasure*, in the Design of Almighty God, being that Satisfaction, which necessarily arises from Our Senses, and the Objects about Us; and from the indissolvible Relation of these *two*, to one another; and our Senses and these Objects in this mutual Relation being the Work of God himself: the *Pleasure* which results thence, must be in itself good, and fitting. The *Pleasures* of this World consequently are *used*, as they ought to be, when they are looked upon as the grateful Circumstances of our well-being in this World; when they are pursued with *Temperance* and *Moderation*, so as to preserve, and not destroy Life and Health; so, as the Laws and Dictates of sound Reason direct; so, as not to break in either upon our own Duty and Innocence; or upon the *Property* and *Peace* of *Others* about Us. *Thus using* them, we take care, that what is not *Evil* in itself, doth not become evil, and pernicious, but beneficial, and good to Us, as long as we are in this State.

I have thus endeavoured to give you the best Account I can, *when* it is that we *use this World, as not abusing it*; by shewing You, when we may be said to *use* the principal good Things it boasts of, *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleasure*, as we ought: *viz.* as the Nature of Things,

Things, the Nature of Ourſelves, the Nature of Human Society, and the eternal Laws of God, direct, and require. And from this Account will eaſily appear, what I propoſed, SERM. IV.

III. In the *third* Place, *When* it is that We *uſe* the World, in the *Apoſtle's* Phraſe, *as abuſing it*. And this *Abuſe* of the World, to be ſure, is the very contrary to the *right Uſe* of it. When the *Love* of *Mony* becomes in Us the *Root* of *all*, or of any, *Evil:* When we are ſo under the Power of it, as to be barbarous even to *Ourſelves*; When the *Riches* of this World are made the Occaſions, or the Inſtruments, either of Unmercifulneſs and Hardheartedneſs; or of Fraud, Rapine, and Injuſtice to *Others*; or, of Intemperance and Madneſs of Pleaſure, to *Ourſelves:* Whenever any thing of this Sort appears, *Riches* are *then* groſly *abuſed* with the higheſt Ingratitude to GOD who beſtowed them; and the greateſt Inhumanity to *Society*, which ought to feel the Benefit, and good Influence, of them.

Again, When the *Honours* of this World dazle a Man's Eyes, and turn his Head giddy; ſo that *Right* no longer ſeems *Right*; nor *Wrong*, *Wrong*; but *Good* is put for *Evil*, and *Evil* for *Good*; *Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter:* when Pride, and Haughtineſs, and diſcourteous Behaviour, are the Effect of that Diſ-

SERM. IV.

Distinction which they give to one Man from another: when the *Passions* of the *Heart* are raised and boiled up into the *Head*, by them; and the Man can come to think himself above the Rules of *Ordinary Virtue*, and that He is privileged to be a *Sinner*, as well as a *Man*, of Distinction; then, the true Use of *Honour* is forgotten; and the *Abuse* of it is gross, and palpable, thro' the whole Behaviour of such a Person. Or, if all his Aim be to be high in the View of Men, and exalted in *Place* and *Power* above the common Level; *Ambition* then is his God; and the *Laws* of *Ambition* are the Maxims of his Conduct: and then, tho' the Laws of the true God, and the Rights of all Mankind, stand in the Way, they are but of little Force to hinder the Effect of such a *Master*.

Again, When the *Pleasures* of Sense, administered by *this World*, are made the Measures of all Good, and a Man comes to place supreme Happiness in them; when they are pursued beyond the Bounds of lawful and right; so as to break in upon his own Health, and Life; or upon the Rules of *Decency* and Modesty; or upon the Quiet and *Property* of *Others*; so, as to hinder him from doing God or Man that Service He might otherwise do: When Intemperance, and Luxury, and Neglect of all that is great and good, is the Effect of a Man's Attach-

SERM. IV.

Attachment to *Pleaſure*, and his Love of worldly Delights; I *need not* ſay, the *Pleaſures* annexed by God Almighty to Senſe and ſenſible Objects, are then groſly and perfectly *abuſed*. The Man himſelf will come to find it, if He lives long enough to feel the pernicious Effects of ſuch a Behaviour, which it will certainly, at length, have, upon his Mind, his Health, his Eſtate, his Reputation; upon every Thing which he values, even in this World, ſuppoſing him to have caſt off all Regard to another to come. In a word, when the World, the *Riches*, or *Honours*, or *Pleaſures*, of the World, are ſo regarded, or ſo *uſed*, as to be the Occaſions, or Inſtruments, of ſinning againſt God, our Neighbour, or our own true Intereſt; *then*, the *World* is uſed, ſo as to be *abuſed*.

From this Account, therefore, of the *Uſe*, and *Abuſe*, of the *Riches*, *Honours*, and *Pleaſures* of this State, it appears that there are two Ways of Behaviour, with reſpect to theſe Things. The *One* is ſuch a Behaviour, as renders Us, and denominates Us truly the *Maſters* of what we poſſeſs here; the *Other*, ſuch a Behaviour as makes and denominates Us their *Slaves:* the *One* makes theſe good Things, our Servants; the *Other* renders them our Lords. For when we are perfectly under the Dominion of *Riches*, *Honour*, or *Pleaſure*;

SERM. IV.

so bewitched and captivated with the Love of any of them, as to be influenced in our Actions by them; so, as *when they say Come, to come*; *when they say Go, to go*; *and when they say Do this, to do it:* when the Case is thus, I say, it is plain, That *they* possess *Us*, and not *We*, *them*; that *They* are our *Masters*, not we *theirs*; that they *use* Us, as their *Slaves*, not *We*, them, as our *Servants:* For they command, and we obey. But *then* only are We their *Masters*, when our *Love* to them is in perfect Subjection to the *Love* of *God*, which is the *Law* of *Eternal Reason*; when we make them subservient to the End of our enjoying them, and the true Happiness of Ourselves; not guided or impelled by the unresisted Violence of Passion; but governed and tempered by the wise Influences of Reason. And now, that we may thus *use the World*, *as not abusing it*, We must, in the last Place, as I proposed,

IV. Consider the *Argument* here made use of by St. *Paul*; only, accommodating it to the ordinary and more general Condition of this World. *For the Fashion*, or *Figure*, *of this World passeth away.* The present Scene of Things is perpetually changing: and Another, of a very different Nature, hastning to open upon Us: Both which make up the

Apostle's

Apoſtle's Reaſoning. There is Force enough in theſe *two* Conſiderations, to deſtroy that Devotion to this World, which is the Cauſe of all the *Abuſe* of it; and to temper our Concern about it, ſo as to engage Us to *uſe* it as we ought. SERM. IV.

For conſider, I pray you, when you have amaſſed together an Heap of *Riches*, what is it you have got? An Heap of *good Things*, if you pleaſe; but good Things, liable to a thouſand Accidents: uncertain in their Poſſeſſion; often following the great Revolutions of this lower World; and changing their *Maſters*, with all the Viciſſitudes of Human Affairs. It is enough to ſay of them, that they belong to a Scene of Things, which is always in Motion, and ever ready to change. A great Loſs, common to all worldly Buſineſs; a great Miſtake, to which the beſt Heads are liable; a *Fire*, an *Inundation*, a *Perfidiouſneſs* in Thoſe who are truſted; a *popular Rage*; Many more Things, to which this State is liable, have often changed the *Scene* of *Plenty*, and *Riches*, and ſurprized thoſe with Diſtreſs and Calamity, who have perhaps thought themſelves too ſecure, and far out of the Reach of any ſuch Evils. And *then*, the Poſſeſſors themſelves are ſure of being removed, either ſooner or later, from theſe Poſſeſſions; and this is ano-

SERM. IV.

ther Change made in our Scene. *We* are taken away from the World: and so, with Respect to Us, the *Fashion of this World* truly *passeth away*, when we Ourselves pass away. For it is all one, in effect, whether *That* passeth from *Us*, or *We* pass from *that*; whether *We* are removed from our *Riches*, or our Riches, from Us. This latter *may be*, by Multitudes of unforeseen Accidents: but the Former *must* certainly *be*, one Time or other, by the unmoveable Decree of our Maker.

The same may be said with Respect to worldly *Honours*, and *Pleasures*. They must be as uncertain, as this State itself is, to which they belong: and *We* must as certainly be torn from them by Death, as we now enjoy them in Life. And the little Time we live in this World, how often do we see the *Scene* of *worldly Honour* changed; and the *Wheel*, that is ever turning, carrying up *one*, and bringing down *another?* The Fashion of this World passeth away, when the Scene of *Honour* is changed: and that Scene is as often turned upside down, as *Favour*, and *Opinion*, and a thousand unforeseen *Accidents*, work. And, as to *Pleasure*; Men die to *that*; even before they die to Nature. It becomes insipid to them, even whilst they are alive. The *Scene* of *that* changes, whilst they look on: and they grow insen-

SERM. IV.

inſenſible, whether they will or no, and unmoved by what uſed to give them the greateſt Satisfaction.

But then, as *this Scene* changeth continually, and at laſt is quite removed, there is *Another* to ſucceed, ſo unlike it, ſo oppoſite to it, that the ſame *Riches* are no *Riches*; the ſame *Honours* no *Honours*; the ſame *Pleaſures* no *Pleaſures*, when that appears. Your Mony, if you could carry it with You, is not current in that other State: Your *Honours* are *there*, as *faded* Garlands, dead and gone. Your *Pleaſures* will there have no Attraction or Influence; becauſe They will have no being.

What little Reaſon, therefore, have We to *abuſe* them in this State, by overvaluing them, or by employing them to ill Purpoſes; when the *Scene* that is to ſucceed is of ſuch a Nature that they will be all uſeleſs in it; and the very Memory of them inſipid: and eſpecially, when the only Mention to be made of them at the opening of that New State of Things, will be, upon Occaſion of a ſtrict and tremendous Enquiry, how We have uſed them in this? The *Charity*, the *Humanity*, the *Generoſity*, that have accompanied *Riches*, will then be the only Advantage and Gain of the *Rich* Man: the *Modeſty*, the *Humility*, the *Meekneſs*, that have attended the *Honours* of this World, will

SERM. IV.

be the only Glory of the *Honourable*: and the *Temperance*, and *Moderation*, that have been used in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of *Pleasure*, will then be the only *Happiness* of such as have had the *Pleasures* of this World at their Command.

The Sum of what hath been said, is this. *The Fashion of this World passeth away. But the Fashion of Another World*, which *passeth not away*, succeeds to it. And therefore, let Us *use this World, as not abusing it*; and let our Hearts, and our Treasure, be in that other future, never ending, State; in which we are all infinitely concerned.

Of

Of the Love of PLEASURE.

SERMON V.

Preached before the KING, *March* 10, 1727-8.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleaſures more than Lovers of God.

IN an *Age* of Gaiety and Luxury, which, if we had a mind to diſtinguiſh it from other Ages, we might juſtly call the *Age* of *Pleaſure*; and in a *Country*, where the Taſte and Purſuit of *Pleaſure* have been carried to as high a Pitch of Elegance and Extravagance, as Invention and Wealth can well ſtretch them; and in an *Aſſembly*, in which many of Thoſe preſent have all the Advantages which Power and Riches can put into their Hands for the full Enjoyment of *Pleaſure*: it cannot be improper; Nay, it muſt be agreeable to the peculiar *End* of *Preaching*; to ſpend ſome Time in leading Men to juſt and reaſonable Thoughts upon a

SERM. V.

Subject in which their Happineſs, even in their own Opinion, is ſo deeply concerned.

Let not what I have now propoſed give you any Fears that I am ſo abſurd, as to attempt to rob you of ſo great and darling a *Good*, as *Pleaſure*; or to perſuade you into ſuch a *State* of *Inſenſibility*, or *Pain*, as neither *Human Nature* can admit of, nor Reaſon, or GOD, require. My Deſign is quite the Contrary. I am going to be an *Advocate* for *Pleaſure*; and to ſhew you, as well as I can, how you may enjoy it more effectually, by enjoying it more ſincere, and leſs mixed with *Unhappineſs*, as well as for a longer Duration, even in *this* Life, than you can poſſibly hope to do in any other Method. This is all the *Mortification* you ſhall hear of, from Me, in *this Seaſon* (ſo called) of *Mortification: A Mortification!* which will, I am confident, *mortify* and kill only the *Pains*, and *Uneaſineſſes* of Life; but enliven and prolong the *Pleaſures* of it; and ſuch an *One*, as is perfectly agreeable to the *Chriſtian Religion* itſelf, which came from Heaven not to diſſolve any of the Laws of Nature, or to deſtroy the natural Connexion of any one thing to another; but to add the Motives of the World to come, to thoſe Dictates of *Reaſon*, which are ſtill left as the unalterable Rule of our Conduct, in ſuch Caſes as

as this now before Us. And, in anſwering the End I have propoſed, I ſhall SERM. V.

I. Shew what I mean by the *Pleaſures* I am going to ſpeak of: And,

II. Make ſome *Obſervations*, chiefly upon the *Two* different, or contrary, Methods of purſuing theſe *Pleaſures*. And from theſe you will eaſily judge,

III. On which Side the *Advantage* manifeſtly lyes, in the Point of *Pleaſure* itſelf.

I. Under the *firſt* of theſe, I will not be ſo unfair as to mean One Thing, whilſt, I know, Thoſe, who are moſt concerned, mean Another. The Word *Pleaſure*, is now, by long Cuſtom in common Diſcourſe, come to be appropriated to the *Gratifications of our Senſes*, properly ſo called. And when we ſpeak of a *Man* of *Pleaſure*, we are always underſtood to mean, One who is, in a peculiar Manner, a Follower of the *Pleaſures of Senſe*. The *Covetous* Man has, without doubt, his *Pleaſures*, adapted to his own Narrowneſs of Soul, and inordinate Appetite after *Mony*; even that Abundance of it which is quite uſeleſs to Himſelf. The *Ambitious* has likewiſe *Pleaſures*, in the Elevation of Himſelf above Others, and in the flattering Hope of a ſtill greater Heighth,

SERM. V.

abſtracted from other Gratifications. The Man of *Virtue*, that is, of true *Honour*, has *Pleaſures*, infinitely ſuperior to both, immediately and directly reſulting from the inward *Rectitude* of his Mind. But Theſe are not the *Pleaſures* we mean when we uſe the Word by itſelf, in Diſcourſe: but the *Idea* which always goes along with it, is That of the *Pleaſures*, or *Gratifications*, of *Senſe*, properly ſo called. And it is with regard to *Theſe* peculiarly that I now ſpeak. After I have ſaid this, the

II. Next Step is to offer, as I propoſed, ſuch *Obſervations* upon this Subject as will lead us to that true Judgment upon the Whole, without which all Boaſts of *Pleaſure* are but vain Words; and by which alone we can juſtly pretend to ſettle any Title to that *Good*, which, with ſo much Paſſion, we are ſeeking after. And this, I think, cannot be done better than by conſidering the *Circumſtances*, and *Conſequences*, of the *different* Conduct of Men, in their Purſuit, and Enjoyment, of this Good: neither aggravating the *Unhappineſſes* of *One* Sort; nor exalting, more than is undeniably juſt, the *Happineſſes* of the *Other*.

1. In the *firſt* Place, with regard to *Thoſe* who have entered, without Reaſon or Mode-

SERM. V.

ration, into this Field of *Pleaſure*; No one of themſelves can deny, what too many know by conſcious and ſenſible Experience, that there is a *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*, (of That I mean which muſt be allowed to be *Pleaſure*,) which, by natural Conſequence, introduces a Scene of *Pain* and *Bodily Uneaſineſs*; as really *Pain*, (and much more laſting,) as the *Pleaſure* itſelf was *Pleaſure*, which was the ſole Cauſe of it.

Nor can it be denied that, in ſome Caſes, the Purſuit of *Pleaſure*, made eager by the preſent ungoverned Paſſions of the *Purſuer*, is ſeen, in a little Time, to lay waſte the very Support of *Pleaſure* itſelf; and, by the Exceſs of Extravagance, to bring on ſuch temporal Inconveniences, as change the *Scene* entirely from a *ſhort* Scene of *Rioting* in *Joy*, to a *long* one of ſenſible *Grief* and *Sorrow*, when He finds Himſelf deprived of the very Poſſibility of going on in the ſame Courſe. For this muſt be the Caſe of *Pleaſure*, whereever *Paſſion* will know no Bounds; conſidering that the *Riches* of the Purſuer, tho' great as you pleaſe, upon this Suppoſition, muſt be ſoon waſted to Nothing.

But if ſuch immediate Evils are, by a cautious Prudence, avoided by Some, it may ſtill be ſaid, that there is often ſeen, in their Examples

SERM. V.

amples, a Purſuit of *Pleaſure*, founded upon a *Scheme* of Diſhonour; and this is always accompanied by uninterrupted *Cares*; carried on with numberleſs Anxieties; ſucceſsful perhaps for a Length of Time; but, when an End is put to it by any unlucky *Event*, naturally followed by *Uneaſineſſes*, which outweigh all the Remembrance, and efface every Image, of what was once thought *Pleaſure*. For, before Men have quite put off Humanity, the Reflexion of a *wounded Spirit*, and the Regret of a ſenſible Heart, are, in ſome Events, ſuch Effects of this *Purſuit*, as change the ſweeteſt *Honey* into the bittereſt *Gall*; even in the Minds of Thoſe who think of *this* Life only.

This is indeed, a *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*, ſo unworthy of human Nature, and ſo diſhonourable, in the Eſtimation of the Generality of Mankind; that, as *Shame* for ever follows it, ſo muſt the *Fear* of Diſcovery always attend it. And this is a Companion, alone ſufficient to deſtroy the very *Eſſence* of *Pleaſure* itſelf, in any Mind not totally loſt to all Generous Sentiments within.

You may obſerve that I have not, in theſe Inſtances, ſo much as mentioned any *Remorſe* of Mind, but that cauſed by the *preſent* Evils of a too eager *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*; nor

nor any Miſeries but thoſe of the *preſent* State, introduced by it. But, as *Conſcience* is *Reaſon* itſelf, firſt guiding Us, and then cenſuring Us; as *Reaſon* is the Gift of God to all Men, for their Government; and *Pleaſure* is his gracious *Law*, for the Good, and not for the Ruine, of his Creatures; it is impoſſible that there ſhould not be a Remorſe of Another Sort, and an inward Diſtreſs, in all well formed Souls, following upon ſuch *Purſuits* of *Pleaſure* mentioned before, as evidently are Contradictions to the Will of that God who made Us what we are, and placed Us in this State, ſurrounded with ſenſible Objects; Inſtances of the higheſt *Ingratitude* to Him, who formed us capable of *Pleaſure*; *Injuries* to our Neighbours, who have a Title to our good Offices; and, in ſome Caſes, groſs *Violations* of the Laws of *Society*, for which our great Creator made Us.

2. *Secondly*, I will now go on to obſerve the oppoſite Maxims of purſuing, and enjoying, the ſame Good: and theſe are ſuch as make the *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*, entirely different, in every *Circumſtance*, and *Conſequence*, from the former. For this Purſuit and Enjoyment of *Pleaſure*, under the Conduct of *Reaſon* and *Moderation*, is undeniably ſuch a *Purſuit* of it, as does *not* bring on a State

SERM. V.

of Bodily *Pain* and Indiſpoſition, as its natural or probable Conſequence. It is ſuch a *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*, as is free from that long Train of Fears and Anxieties, which never fail to attend upon the contrary Purſuit; unacquainted with any Diſappointments but what the common Condition of human Life makes unavoidable; and untroubled with any Remorſe of Evils procured to Others, by the Man's paſſionate Regard to his own Pleaſure only. It is ſuch a *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*, as does not waſte or deſtroy that Fortune which is neceſſary for the Purpoſes of the moſt innocent Enjoyments of Life themſelves; and ſuch a Purſuit, as carries no Shame along with it, in the Judgment of the World about Us. In a word, it is ſuch a Purſuit, as is a Mark of Gratitude to the Giver of all our Faculties of Pleaſure Themſelves, and of all the Pleaſures about which they can at any Time be converſant. And, being no Violation of any one of his Laws; no Breach into the univerſal Syſtem of Good and Right; carrying with it no Evil to the Members of human Society, or to the Publick; It cannot be the Parent of any inward Diſtreſs or Anguiſh of Mind; nor conſequently end either in Repentance here, or Puniſhment hereafter.

Thus ſtands, in general, the Difference of the *two Purſuits*. And now,

III. On

SERM. V.

III. On which Side, the *Advantage* lies, even in the Point of *Pleaſure* itſelf, is next to be conſidered.

Now, in the ſtating of This, we muſt imitate the Men of worldly Buſineſs, in the *Method* of ſtating their *Profit* or *Loſs*, which They follow ſo as not to impoſe either upon Others or Themſelves. If never ſo many of the particular *Articles* in their Account are real *Profit*, but yet have themſelves been the Occaſions of *Loſs* or *Diſadvantage*, more than proportionable to it; the Sum of ſuch an Account cannot be *Profit:* and if the *Balance* at the *End* be *Loſs*; it is ſmall Comfort to them, and little Matter of Boaſting, that there are in it particular *Articles* of *Gain*, and thoſe, perhaps, very conſiderable. It is from the *Total Amount*, that they judge: as That alone, by which their Condition in Buſineſs muſt be determined.

And thus it muſt be in the Caſe of *Pleaſure*. Put down, if you pleaſe, all the *Gratifications* of Senſe, you can think of. Let them be magnified and ſwelled to as high a Pitch as an Imagination devoted to them can do it. But be juſt in not deceiving yourſelves. Put down, before you pretend to judge of the *Whole*, all the *Pain* of *Body* and *Mind*; the Diſeaſes, the Calamities, which were the Reſult of them: the

SERM. V.

the Fears, and Anxieties, and Diſappointments, which attended them: the Ruine, in ſome Caſes, of Fortune and Eſtate; in ſome, of *Reputation* and *Honour*; in others, the laſting *Wound* of *Remorſe*, in the Reflexion upon what, it may be, has produced Miſeries ſomewhere or other, never to be retrieved, and never to be alleviated; and in All, the inward Uneaſineſs natural to a reaſonable Being, in every Step of Life, which Reaſon does not approve of. Put into the Account every known *evil* Conſequence under the Notion of *Pain*, the oppoſite of *Pleaſure*; and then it muſt come out thus. If the total Amount of ſuch a *Purſuit* of *Pleaſure*, be really found, as it muſt be, to be *Pain*, of the ſeveral ſorts before mentioned, naturally produced by it; and this more than ſufficient to counter-balance every *Article* of *Pleaſure* in it: the Man of *Pleaſure* himſelf, to whom the Name is now appropriated, the Man who pretends to ſtudy and follow after *Pleaſure* as his great Good, muſt be found, at laſt, not to underſtand what it is truly to enjoy *Pleaſure* itſelf; nay, frequently to deſtroy his own Purpoſes, by ſhortening and ruining his own *Pleaſures*.

On the contrary, the Man of *Virtue*, who is alſo the Man of true *Honour*; who enjoys the *Pleaſures* of *Senſe* under thoſe Rules which

which make them fit perfectly easy upon his *Mind*, his *Body*, his *Estate*, his *Reputation*; must be acknowledged, in the *Whole*, by the natural Operation of Virtue, and by the *Wisdom* of *God*, in establishing the Nature and Relation of Man, and all things around him, far to exceed the *Other* at the *Close* of the *Account*; and to triumph just as much over Him, in *Pleasure* itself, as he does in *Virtue*, *Innocence*, and *Honour*. I say, in the *Whole*; because, as I am free to acknowledge, on the one hand, that there are *Pleasures*, in the Sense in which We now use the Word, to the *Man* of *Pleasure*, which to the *Man* of *Virtue* are wholly unknown; yet, it is certainly true, that Judgment must be made from the *Whole*, and not from a *Part*; and that, upon the foot of the *Whole*, it is undeniable that the Man of *Virtue* enjoys *Pleasure*, more *sincere*, i. e. more free from the Mixture of any of those *Pains* and *Evils* which are its natural Consequences to others; and with much more Security of continuing so to do; than the Man of *Pleasure* can pretend to do. To which We may add this disagreeable Circumstance, that the Course of *Pleasure* which the *Voluptuary* runs so precipitately, is *first* in Time; and that the Course of *Evils* which are its Produce, succeeds; and lasts often long after

SERM. V.

SERM. V.

after the whole Scene of *Pleasure* is vanished. And certainly, it is less tolerable to *human Nature*, to pass from *Pleasure* to a State of *Pain*, than to pass thro' a Course of *Pain* to a settled State of *Pleasure*. To which We may add, That, as these two enhance one another, the *Pleasure past* must give the Man a *double* Sense of that *Pain*, which not only succeeds it, but is really owing to it.

The great *Doctor* of *Pleasure* in the *Heathen* World, who had, with equal Stupidity and Impiety, banished *Providence* out of the World, and took into his Account *this Life* only, saw plainly the Importance of *Virtue*, in order to the Enjoyment of *Pleasure* itself. And tho' his Doctrine, by unhappily placing the *Chief Good* of Man in *Pleasure*, not strictly explained, led his rash Followers into the most intemperate *Pursuits* of their own *Unhappiness* under that Notion; yet his *Example*; and the Temperance and Command of Passion, by which He enjoyed and prolonged his own *Pleasures*, were, indeed, a Reproach to *Them*, who would not interpret his *Maxim* by his own *Practice*. I only just mention this, to shew that even *He*, who studied *Pleasure* only, put the *Virtue* of *Temperance*, or the Command of present Appetite, into the very Composition of *Pleasure* itself. To return,

The

SERM. V.

The great Miſtake in this Matter, amongſt the Men of *Pleaſure*, ſeems to lye in this, that they do not make *Pleaſure*, and *Happineſs*, two diſtinct Conſiderations: or rather, that they never inquire after *Happineſs*, but are only for ever ſeeking after particular Inſtances of *ſenſible Pleaſure*, and ready to fall in with every Invitation to them. Whereas *Pleaſure* and *Happineſs* ſtand, even in common Diſcourſe, for two ſo different Things, that no One, by a *Man of Pleaſure* underſtands you to mean a *Happy Man*; but rather, a *Man* who diſregards *Happineſs* for the Sake of particular Inſtances of *Pleaſure*. For *Happineſs* being a State of Mind, of a better and more fixt Nature than the ſudden Starts and *Paſſions* of Mankind; it muſt follow, that, if the paſſionate *Purſuits* of any real or imagined Pleaſure, break in upon *that Happineſs*, which is the true Happineſs of an Animal endowed with Reaſon to direct the Conduct of his Life; then, the Man, meanly and ignobly, enjoys *Pleaſure*, without being in a State of *Happineſs*.

And from hence a moſt important *Truth* flows: *viz.* That, if the *total Amount* of the Purſuit of ſenſible *Pleaſures* be *not* a ſettled State of *Inward Happineſs*, but the contrary; the *Purſuit* has been irregular and unworthy of a *Creature* to whom God has given the *Capacity*, and

SERM. V.

Occaſions, of ſuch *Pleaſure*; and that theſe unreaſonable *Purſuers* of this attracting Appearance, have, by their paſſionate ungoverned *Love of Pleaſure*, ſhewn that they have no Knowledge of what *Happineſs* is; and are quite Strangers to their own greateſt Good: And that *Others*, who have obſerved the contrary Rules in all their Gratifications, have really, and truly, enjoyed *Pleaſure* itſelf in ſuch a Manner, that it has not interrupted their *Happineſs*; nay, that it has contributed to as good a State of *Happineſs*, as Man can hope to attain in this preſent ſhort, uncertain, Life.

Thus have I been an *Advocate for Pleaſure*, as I at firſt promiſed; and not againſt it. I allow *Man*, as framed in the Manner he is, by his Creator, and placed in *this State*, ſurrounded with Objects of all his Senſes, to be unavoidably, by his Nature, and by the *Law* of *Creation*, which conſtituted the Relations of Things, a *Lover of Pleaſure*. My great Point has been, to ſhew you the true, and moſt laſting, Way of enjoying this *Good*. And, if I have been ſpeaking to any Purpoſe all this Time, the *only good Rule* muſt be, to be *Virtuous*, in order to enjoy *Pleaſure*; at the firſt Sound, perhaps, to many Ears, a ſurprizing, dull, and unacceptable *Rule*: but to Thoſe who will give it but a few Minutes Conſideration, a certain *Truth*; a *Rule*

a *Rule* demonſtrable, from Nature and Experience, to be a Friend to *Pleaſure*, by ennobling it; by extending it beyond the Limits which ungoverned *Paſſion* will ever confine it to; and by freeing it from thoſe Mixtures of *Evil* and *Pain*, which the contrary Rule will certainly throw into it. SERM. V.

You ſee, then, that, in the Account of Reaſon, which always conſiders all the Circumſtances and mutual *Relations* of Things, the *Love of Pleaſure* is not, in itſelf, a Crime; but, indeed, the *Law* of *God*, who created Man what He is, and placed Him in ſuch a World as This; and is himſelf the *Author* of that *Pleaſure*, which neceſſarily reſults from his own Works, and his own Will. You will ſee, if you go a Step farther, that Reaſon itſelf will ſupport the *ſevere Cenſure* of the *Apoſtle*, in the *Text*, fixt upon Thoſe, *not* who are *Lovers* of *Pleaſure* (for the *Apoſtle* does not reſt his *Cenſure* there) but who are *Lovers* of *Pleaſure*, more than *Lovers* of GOD: *i. e.* who prefer the paſſionate *Purſuit* of particular Inſtances of *Pleaſure*, before the Regard due to the *Laws* of that *God*, who is the great Author of *Pleaſure* itſelf, to whom they owe the very Poſſibility of enjoying it.

Let us, therefore, from *This*, and from what has been ſaid, argue, that They, who

SERM. V.

purſue *Pleaſure* in Contradiction to the *Laws* of GOD, or to his Diſhonour, are ungrateful to *Him*, who alone gave them this Good, by being *Lovers* of *Pleaſure* more than *Lovers* of *God:* that They who purſue it in any Inſtances, in *Violation* of the Peace and Rights of Neighbourhood, are very bad Members of *Society*, by being *Lovers* of *Pleaſure* more than *Lovers* of their *Neighbours:* and that They, who purſue it to the Hurt or Ruine of their own *Honour*, *Reputation*, *Eſtate*, *Health*, and *Families*, are unjuſt to their own Intereſts, by being, truly, *Lovers* of *Pleaſure* more than *Lovers* of *Themſelves*, in that Senſe in which they ought to be ſo; expoſing Themſelves, for the Sake of a preſent violent *Paſſion*, to the Loſs of every thing dear in this World; even of all *their own Happineſs*, which can never ſubſiſt, but under the Direction of *Virtue*.

To ſumm up the Whole of what is juſtly to be ſaid; If We chuſe to conſider Ourſelves as Beings concerned chiefly in the finding out, and enjoying, the *Pleaſures* of *this World* only; it is moſt certainly true, That, in this View only, however the Unexperienced may flatter themſelves, the Courſe of *Pleaſure* muſt, and will, be *limited* by ſomething or other; and the *wild Purſuer* muſt, and will, be *ſtopt*, by ſome *Obſtacle* or other, in his *Career*. And

whether any Man will not be more eaſy, and ſatisfied, in the Reflexion that good Reaſons, though of *preſent* Concernment only, have prevented the utter Ruine of his *Happineſs*, by confining his *Pleaſures* within the Bounds of *Juſt* and *Right*, than in the Thought of having left them to be totally *ſtopped*, and deſtroyed, by the natural Conſequences only of his own unreſtrained *Paſſion*; let Himſelf judge. SERM. V.

But, if We will be ſo juſt to Ourſelves, as not to ſtop here; but to go, as We ought, into a Courſe of Thoughts much more worthy of ſuch Creatures as We are; If We would look farther into Ourſelves, and conſider our own Frames; and alſo the main Deſign of our great Maſter, *Chriſt* himſelf, in coming into the World; We could not but find ſtill plainer Demonſtrations, that *Reaſon* was given Us to govern the *Love* of *Pleaſure*. For We ſhould very clearly ſee, That, as We have Faculties adapted to ſenſible Objects in this ſhort Life; ſo We have Others, of an higher Nature, to govern them, which look forward, towards a better State to come: That We are made with ſuch Capacities, and ſuch Powers, of Reaſoning, Reflexion, and Judgment upon our own Conduct, as will force Us to acknowledge ourſelves capable of being called to a ſtrict Account, and framed exactly as We ſhould have been, upon

SERM. V.

on the Suppoſition that ſo it will be: That, as it is perfectly agreeable to the Reaſon of Mankind to expect it, ſo our Bleſſed Lord, by a plain Declaration, ſufficiently atteſted by his Reſurrection from the Dead, has aſſured the World that ſuch a ſolemn Day of *Account* will come, in which the Triumph will belong to Thoſe, who have here below kept the *Love* of *Pleaſure* in Subjection to the *Love* of Virtue, and true *Happineſs*; and Shame and Diſtreſs to Thoſe, who have been *Lovers* of *Pleaſure*, more than Lovers of *God*, their *Neighbours*, or *Themſelves*. And Theſe will be ſuch *Arguments*, as will ſet us above every Allurement; and engage us to live the preſent Life by that *Religious Wiſdom*, whoſe *Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all whoſe Paths are Peace:* and will certainly conduct us ſafe, thro' a ſhort deluſive *Scene* of the fleeting *Images* of *Pleaſure* only, to the real and laſting *Pleaſures* of a State of *Happineſs*, never more to be interrupted, either by our own *Paſſions*, or any other Enemy.

St.

St. PAUL'S *Discourse to* FELIX.

SERMON VI.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 15, 1729-30.

ACTS xxiv. part of 24th and 25th Verses.

He sent for Paul, *and heard Him concerning the Faith in* Christ: *And as He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come,* Felix *trembled.*

SERM. VI.

THE Persons here spoken of are, St. *Paul*, a faithful Preacher of the *Gospel* of *Jesus Christ*; and *Felix*, the Governour of *Judea*: St *Paul*, now a *Prisoner*, under the Apprehension of all the Evils which the Malice and Importunity of the Whole Body of the *Jews* might extort from their *Governour*, now his *Judge*: and a *Governour*, whose personal *Character*, it appears from a *Roman Historian*, as well as from what is said of Him in this *Chapter*, might well have increased the

SERM. VI.

Apoſtle's Apprehenſions of the moſt unjuſt and ſevere Sentence which *Power*, in the Hands of ſuch a Man, could threaten; and, what is ſtill more, a *Governor* accompanied, at this very Time, by *One* who had a Share in his Guilt, and an Influence over his Paſſions. And yet, in the Midſt of all theſe Circumſtances, we find a very uncommon Appearance; the *Priſoner*, undaunted and unconcerned at his own Danger; the *Governour*, terrified and *trembling*, as if his *Priſoner* had been his *Judge*; and were now pronouncing a Sentence of Condemnation upon him. What was the Reaſon of this ſurprizing Event? Innocence, and the Teſtimony of an upright Heart, on the One Side; Guilt, and the Reproaches of an awakened Conſcience, on the Other. The *Former* created in St. *Paul* a Boldneſs to adapt his Diſcourſe to the Caſe of the great Man he ſpoke to, whoſe Character, it is evident, he well knew: the *Latter* enfeebled the Heart of *Felix*, and forced Him to betray that Fear of future Puniſhment, from a ſuperior Power, which all the Amuſements and Pleaſures of this World can hardly ever totally remove from Guilt and Sin.

As my preſent Deſign is to make this Account of St. *Paul's* Diſcourſe to *Felix* the Occaſion of ſuch Obſervations as are of univerſal Importance to all *Chriſtians:* the *Three* Points

Points which immediately offer themſelves to my Thoughts are Theſe:

I. The Notion St. *Paul* had of preaching *Jeſus Chriſt*, and *his Faith*.

II. The Agreeableneſs of This to the whole *Tenor* of the *New Teſtament*. And

III. The great Uſe, towards the main *End* of the *Goſpel*, of the *Argument* drawn from a *Judgment* to come, to ſuch Creatures as We are.

And if I apply this particularly to Thoſe in the *Higher* Stations of human Life, it is becauſe I think it the greateſt Inſtance of Duty, and the beſt Good-Office, which any One, who ſpeaks from This Place, can poſſibly perform.

I. We cannot but obſerve from this Paſſage, what St. *Paul's* Notion muſt have been of Preaching the *Faith* of *Chriſt*, ſo as to anſwer the main End of it.

It is expreſly told us, that *Felix* ſent for *Paul*, in order to hear Him concerning the *Faith* in *Chriſt*; concerning that Religion, for the Sake of which he was now in Bonds. There can be no Doubt but that St. *Paul* placed in the beſt Light, all the Evidences for believing in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and particularly his *Re-*

SERM. VI.

Reſurrection from the Dead; which was to him inſtead of All, and to which it was his Cuſtom always to appeal. But, it is as plain that, in deſcribing to *Felix* the Complexion and Genius of the *Chriſtian Faith*, and the great End of *Chriſt's* coming into the World, He repreſented it as enforcing all thoſe Points of *Virtue* and *Morality*, to which Men are obliged as the reaſonable Creatures of an Holy and Juſt God; fitted and deſigned by Him for the mutual Offices of Society. For the only Part of the *Apoſtle's* Diſcourſe about *Faith* in *Chriſt*, or the *Religion* of *Chriſt*, which the ſacred *Hiſtorian* has thought fit to leave us, relates ſolely to *Theſe*, and to the Great Motive to practiſe Them. The Words are very remarkable. In this *private Sermon* about *Chriſt*, and *Faith* in Him, upon which alone St. *Paul* was deſired by *Felix*, to ſpeak, He *reaſons* (as the Word is well rendered) or *argues*, in his Diſcourſe. He ſhews him the *Nature* of the *Faith in Chriſt*, by ſhewing him the unalterable Obligations to *Righteouſneſs*, which includes all Juſtice and Equity; to *Temperance*, or, a Command over our Appetites; and then, by diſplaying before Him the *Judgment* to come, as the great and awful Motive urged by the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, to ſecure and reſtore the Practice of theſe, and all

all other Branches of Morality. It is by *this* Method that He did honour to his Maſter, and to that *Faith* he had embraced; and by *this*, that he endeavoured to repreſent the coming of *Chriſt* into the World as worthy of God who ſent him. SERM. VI.

If St. *Paul*, therefore, *reaſoned* upon theſe Duties; and, in ſetting forth the Excellencies of the *Chriſtian Faith*, deſcribed and inculcated *Morality*, as the great End of it; and thought he could do nothing more for its Honour, than to repreſent it as joined in the ſame Cauſe with Reaſon and uncorrupted Nature; as enforcing the ſame Practice of all the moral and ſocial *Duties*; and reveling the *Wrath* of God againſt all *Immorality*: this is Evidence enough of the Apoſtle's Notion of the Nature and End of the *Chriſtian* Religion; and will be the Juſtification of All Thoſe who follow him in this way of Preaching *Chriſt*, and his *Faith*. But I will go a Step farther, and obſerve,

II. That the Repreſentations made throughout the *New Teſtament*, of the great *End* both of Preaching and Receiving the *Faith* of *Chriſt*; and particularly, the Accounts given of that *Judgment to come*, which is mentioned in the *Text*, do all exactly and uniformly anſwer to this Notion.

The

SERM. VI.

The Fore-runner of our *Lord* opened the Scene by giving Notice to all Sinners around Him, of the Nature of that *Kingdom of God* which was then beginning to ſhew itſelf: That it did not conſiſt in imaginary, or Real, Privileges of *One Sort* of Men, or of *One Nation*, above Another; but that All who would flee from Miſery, or enjoy the Bleſſings of ſuch a *Diſpenſation*, muſt *repent*, ſo as to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*.

When our Bleſſed *Lord* himſelf began to teach the Nature and End of his own coming; it was by preaching *Repentance*, that is, *Amendment*: and, as ſoon as ever He diſcovered any falſe Imagination in his firſt Followers, as if he was come to flatter their Pride, or to indulge their bad Inclinations; He took the firſt *Opportunity* immediately to make them ſenſible of their Miſtake. To this Purpoſe are theſe ſolemn Declarations; That it is not their taking *Him* for their *Maſter*, or the *calling Him their Lord*, that would entitle them to the Happineſs He promiſed; but *the doing the Will of His Father*, the Maker and Governour of all Things: That, in order to be the Children of *God*, and to have the Privileges of ſuch, They muſt conſtantly obey, and imitate, (as far as Humanity will permit) all the Moral Perfections of their Heavenly Father.

And

And to the ſame purpoſe is every other Expreſſion of his, in which he profeſſedly delineated to them the main Strokes of his *Religion*, or taught Them the *End* of his *Appearance*.

His *Apoſtles* and immediate *Diſciples* followed Him cloſe in this main Point, after They themſelves were inſtructed in it. St. *Peter*, in his firſt Preaching, declared to the *Jews*, that God ſent his Son *to bleſs us*, *by turning us* from *our Iniquities*; or, as the Words rather import, to bleſs us, as far as we turn, or in our *turning*, or being *turned*, from our Iniquities, to the Practice of all Virtue. And, in his firſt Epiſtle, He repreſents One great End of *Chriſt's* Suffering to be, that We may *follow the Example of his Patience*; and declares that He *bare our Sins upon the Croſs*, to this Intent, *that We, being dead unto Sin, ſhould live unto Righteouſneſs*. And in This they all unanimouſly agree, even whilſt they ſpeak of his *Death*, under the Notion of a *Sacrifice*, or a *Propitiation*, *for our Sins*; expreſly taking Care to make this itſelf a Leſſon of *Morality*, by declaring no Sins to have any Title to any Benefit from it, but ſuch as are forſaken; and all Immorality to receive a freſh *Aggravation*, inſtead of any *Indulgence*, from it.

The *Life*, therefore, of our *Saviour* was deſigned for our *Pattern* in all *Morality*. His *Doctrine*

SERM. VI.

Doctrine was to lead us to the *Imitation* of *God*, and to the Practice of the Law of uncorrupted Reason, which He always supposed; and to which he always appealed: and this is *Morality*. His *Death* was to engage Us to himself, *i. e.* to the stricter Observation of his Laws, which are the *Laws* of *Morality*. The Doctrine of *Forgiveness* of *Sins*, openly promulged by Him, is ever confined to *Sins* that are forsaken. *Prayer* to the Supreme God, (that great Duty) is an Instance of *Morality*, and is the Dictate of Reason and Nature, as well as the Command of Revelation; and leads us, in its End, and natural Operation upon ourselves, to a greater Sense of all our whole *moral* Duty. And, if We go from hence to the two *Positive Institutions* mentioned in the *New Testament*; We shall find *their* Design to be the same Interest of *Morality*.

The *first* of them, *Baptism*, or the *Ceremony* of Immersion in Water, used in receiving Persons converted to the *Faith* of *Christ*, is constantly declared to be thus intended. It is never described as a *Charm*, or a mere *Privilege*. On the contrary, the Thing signified by it is magnified by St. *Peter*, in Opposition to the Ceremony itself; *the Answer of a good Conscience*, to the *Washing* of *the Outside*. And St. *Paul*, in a most remarkable Manner (*Rom.* vi.) declares

declares the whole Ceremony to represent to *Christians* their *Death unto Sin*; and their *Life unto Righteousness*: the *former*, by their being covered with the *Water*; and the *latter*, by their rising out of the Water again. And, in the Nature of the Thing, it is plainly the Ceremony of admitting Men into a *Religion* which revives all the Obligations of *Morality* upon them, and enforces them more strongly than any other in the World. The *other* Institution is, the Remembrance of *Jesus Christ*, in the *Lord's Supper*; that is, in plain Words, a *Remembrance* of that *Master* who taught us the absolute Necessity of *Morality*, or *Virtue*, to our *Happiness*: and particularly, the Remembrance of his *Death*, which was the greatest Example of many *Virtues* to be practised by us in this imperfect and afflicted State; and which is sufficiently declared to be no Advantage to his Followers, but as it moves *All, who name the Name of Christ, to depart from Iniquity*. And if we speak of *Them*, in the more modern Phrase, as *The Means of Grace*; the very Expression denotes their *End* to be something higher than the *Ceremonies* themselves; and signifies either that *Christian Virtue*, by some called *Grace*, is the *End* to which they are subservient; or that they are *Means* to procure the *Divine Assistance*, another Signification

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI.

tion of the Word *Grace:* which *Aſſiſtance* is allowed to have that higher *End* in view, of our Improvement in all *Morality*.

Thus the *Believing* in *Chriſt*; and the coming into His Religion, and the Remembrance of Him when we are in it; are all adapted, and in their Natures ſubſervient, to One and the ſame great End; the engaging us to abhor all Immorality, and to proceed to the higheſt Perfection we can, in every Inſtance of Morality.

Take away this one great Point; and, I fear, it will be impoſſible to convince any reaſonable Man that *Jeſus Chriſt* was ſent into the World by God. One of the nobleſt Arguments, I am ſure, drawn from this *Deſign* of the *Goſpel*, worthy of God and Man, will be for ever removed from *Chriſtianity:* and where, without This, the Advocates for it can find any Others, truly ſufficient, I know not. Nay, if either *Reaſon*, or the *Goſpel*, tell us Truth about the Diſpoſitions either of GOD, the *Father* of all Things; or of the *Son* of GOD, towards Mankind; it is not ſuppoſeable that *Jeſus Chriſt* would have been ſent into this World, and have lived here, to preach to Men, but in Order to their Perfection in Virtue; and much leſs, that He would have died for Men, but expreſly in order to their Living, as becomes *Men*.

Thus,

SERM. VI.

Thus, We ſee, the *Religion* founded on *Faith*, or *Belief*, in *Jeſus Chriſt*, is *preached*; and *Chriſt* himſelf is *preached*; when the ſtrict Obligations to *all Righteouſneſs* are *preached* and inculcated, agreeably to the End of his coming into the World. To this Purpoſe alone is the Declaration which St. *Paul* made to *Titus*, in order to give him a comprehenſive View of the *Nature* of *Chriſtianity*; and this ſo full an one, that it may well deſerve a Place here, *viz.* That the *Grace*, or *Mercy*, of GOD, *bringing Salvation unto all Men, hath appeared*, in the Goſpel, *teaching us* (as the only way in which it brings Salvation) *that, denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, We ſhould live Soberly, Righteouſly, and Godly in this World*; waiting for the *Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt, who gave Himſelf for Us*, (for this very *End*, here pointed out,) *viz. That he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto Himſelf a peculiar People zealous of Good Works.*

To all this agrees, alſo, every Account we have in the *New Teſtament*, both of the *Proceedings* at the Solemn Day of *Judgment*, mentioned in the *Text*; and of the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* to be diſpenſed to Men, in Conſequence of that *Judgment*. In all of them Nothing but *Immorality* is declared to be puniſhed; nothing but *Morality* and *Virtue*, to

SERM. VI.

be rewarded. The *Pretenders* to the *Favor* of their Maſter, at that Day, who are declared to be rejected by our Lord, in his own Account, are introduced by Him as pleading a certain Title to his *Favor* from their *Zeal*, and *Faith*, by which they have *propheſied* in his Name, and in his Name even worked *Miracles*. But they are to depart from Him into Puniſhment, with all their Pretenſes about them, merely becauſe they were *Workers* of *Iniquity*. But the *Good*, and *Beneficent*, are entertained with Praiſe, and invited into the *Kingdom prepared for them*.

No mention is made of Any condemned, who can plead that they have ſincerely endeavoured to find out the Will of God, and have preferred it before all other Conſiderations. No Sentence pronounced againſt ſuch for Errors in Judgment, through the unavoidable Weakneſs of human Nature: but the Integrity and Morality of All accepted and applauded. One cannot help, as we paſs, being led, by our Saviour's own Account, to think how many Pretenſes will the more *modern Ages of Chriſtianity* furniſh out at that Day? Have we not tranſgreſſed all the moral Laws of God and Nature, to ſhew our Zeal for what we call Religion? will many ſay: And how greatly ſurprized will they be, to find That all their *Inquiſitions*,

Inquisitions, and *Racks*, and *Tortures*, and *Hard-ships*, and *Oppressions*, and even the Merit of overturning all the Boundaries of Good and Evil, for the *Faith* of *Christ*, blasphemously so called; for the *Honour* of *His Mother*; or the extending the Bounds of *his* Church; will be esteemed by their *Lord* himself as Instances of their Guilt; and the highest Injuries to Himself? And how much more surprized, to find the *Excommunicated*, and the *Persecuted*, and *Those* to whom they would not allow the Name of *Christian*, or the Usage due to a *Man*, now called forth into Glory, and honoured in the *Sight* of *Men* and *Angels*, as the true *Children of* God; as having sincerely loved him, and practised all his moral Laws?

Infidelity itself (I hope it may be said without Offence) will then be punished no otherwise than as it is *Immorality*, proceeding from a wilful and resolute Neglect of *Evidence*, or an *immoral* Contradiction to it. And *Faith* itself will then be rewarded, no otherwise than as *Morality* in an *intelligent* Agent; the Result of the honest Enquiry of a well-disposed Mind. Or rather, the *Immorality* of the *Will*, leading at any Time to *Infidelity*; and the *Immorality* of *Practice* proceeding from it; are the Things only to be punished: and the *Moral* good *Disposition* leading to *Faith*, and the *Moral Prac-*

SERM. VI.

tice following from it, to be the only proper Objects of *Reward*; agreeably to all that is said in the *New Testament*. For in *That*, We may observe, there is not any *Faith* celebrated, but either as the Word is taken for the *Gospel-Dispensation*, in Opposition to *Moses's Law*; or, as it is expressly declared to produce actual Obedience to God, and all *Morality*, as the End of it. And this, again, is perfectly agreeable to all that we know of the Nature of God, either from Reason or Revelation; Both which represent Him as just, and a Punisher of dishonest Men, let their *Faith* be never so right; but never as a *Punisher* of the *honest* and *upright*. St. *Paul*, in a very particular Manner, (*Rom.* ii.) declares that future *Rewards* and *Punishments* will be adjudged to the *Morality* and *Immorality* only, of *Those*, who are without a *Revelation*, as well as of *Those* who enjoy One.

This does not at all depreciate the high Value of *Faith* in *Christ*; or of Any of *his own Institutions*. On the contrary, Nothing can be more for their Honour, than to find that the most noble End, and the most worthy of God, is the very End of that *Faith*, and of those *Institutions*. And, I fear, whoever depreciates *Morality*, and would represent to the World any other *End* of *Christianity*, as higher

er than *This*, and not ſubſervient to it; or, whoever would magnify Any *inward* Accompliſhment, or *Outward* Chriſtian *Inſtitution*, before this, and as an *End* ſuperior to it, will be, upon Examination, found to rob that *Divine Religion* of One of it's brighteſt Ornaments; and of One of the nobleſt Arguments it can boaſt: and an Argument, without which, not *Miracles* themſelves can, perhaps, be found ſufficient to recommend it, with Succeſs, to any Perſons of *Virtue*, and good Senſe. Nay, theſe Acts of the Mind, and Outward Performances, receive their Value from the good Diſpoſition, or *Morality*, of the *Mind*; and are, properly ſpeaking, ſubſervient to *Morality* in *Practice*, through the Man's Life: but *Morality* can in no Senſe be ſaid to be ſubſervient to *Them*, as a ſuperior *End*; becauſe it would have been the ſame unalterable good Thing, whether *They* had ever been required, or not. In a word; when We ſpeak of the *End*, We mean the *higheſt End* of the *Goſpel*. And that is the higheſt *End* of the *Whole*, to the procuring or Improvement of which, every *inward* Act of the Mind, and every *outward* Inſtitution, belonging to it, are made and declared to be ſubſervient. And This, to the Glory of the Goſpel be it ſaid, is the *Practice* of all *Morality*.

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI.

But to proceed; Since this solemn *Judgment to come* is so expressly declared by our *Saviour*, and preached by his *Apostles*, as the great *Motive* to *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, and every other *Virtue*; Let us now observe

III. Of how great Use the Consideration of This, may and ought to be, to such Creatures as We are, placed in such a World as this.

St. *Paul's* Discourse to *Felix*, about the unalterable Obligations to *Morality*, might have been entertained as a good and reasonable Lecture: But it was the *Addition* of this other *Topic*, of a *Day* coming, in which All Men were to be called to *Account*; and to be rewarded, or punished, by the supreme Judge; which made the Impression upon Him, here mentioned; and forced him to betray the *inward* Apprehensions of a *Guilty Conscience*. We find, indeed, that it went no farther, than his *present* Concern and Uneasiness. He put off the *Discourse*; and, without doubt, the *Thoughts* of it too. The World had taken such hold of Him, that his Attention presently returned to the Profits and Pleasures of it; and would not suffer Him to give this Subject such a Place in his Thoughts, as the Importance of the Matter required. But let not Us follow such an Example.

This awful Subject of a *Judgment to come*, is not, I own, much worthy of our Regard, unleſs the Expectation of the Thing itſelf be a reaſonable and manly Expectation. But let not any one put the Thoughts of it far from Him, as if This were the Caſe. Let Him look into his own Mind, and it will ſhew Him, in the ſtrongeſt Light, That a *Being* made capable of giving an Account, may juſtly be called to do it: That a *Being* framed ſo as to ſee *Duty*, and *Honour*, in one Method; and *Sin* and *Diſhonour*, in another; and plainly deſigned for *Duty* to a GOD above Him, and a World of *Fellow-Creatures* around Him; has the greateſt Reaſon to expect to have that Account of his Behaviour, demanded of Him, in *Another* Place, which is never demanded of him, in *This*. Theſe are the Thoughts of a Man, as a reaſonable and ſocial Creature: and it is agreeable to the *Dignity* of a Man, and of the higheſt of Men, to entertain Himſelf with the Reflexions becoming his Nature, and reſulting from the peculiar Excellencies of it. And to theſe great and unextinguiſhable Evidences of it, furniſhed from within the Circle of every Man's own Breaſt, the *Goſpel* has added the Weight of that Aſſurance which *Chriſt* has given Us of ſuch a *Judgment to come*.

SERM. VI. Neither let any fly from this Employment, as from a Scene of *Melancholy* and *Distress*, producing only Terror and Uneasiness. The End of this great and awful *Motive*, proposed by *natural* Religion, and heightened by *Revealed*, is not, to make Men *tremble*, but to make Men *better*; not to fill their Souls with *Horror*, but to lead them to the very contrary, by guarding them most effectually against those *Practices* which rob them of their Innocence and their Peace. And could Men be prevailed upon to think of it, as becomes them, I am persuaded, it would make even all the *Goods* of this World more agreeable to them. It would not destroy any *Profit*, *Pleasure*, or *Honour*, which a reasonable Creature would not wish to have destroyed. To all others it would add a Lustre and a Value. To *Riches* it would give the true and proper Use; which is their only Advantage. The *Honours* of this World it would adorn, by setting them off with all those *Virtues*, which alone can render them amiable in the Eyes of Beholders; and without which they are, at best, but gaudy Pageantry. And the *Pleasures* of Sense themselves would be rendered more sincere, unmixed, and lasting, by being restrained from hurting either the *Health*, or *Reputation*, or *Interest*, or *Honour*, of the Pursuer; and by being

being deprived of that Sting of Guilt, which otherwiſe will for ever attend upon them. SERM. VI.

In ſuch a World as ours is; with ſuch a Nature as Man muſt be content with; ſurrounded with the *Temptations* of *Proſperity*, and the *Trials* of *Adverſity*; Who would not wiſh to be under the Influence of a *Motive*, which may preſerve the Dignity of his Nature, at the ſame Time that it guards and increaſes his Virtue. In every Age of our rational Life, and every Circumſtance of it, We more and more, as We paſs, want the friendly Aſſiſtance of ſuch a Motive. The *Innocence* of *Childhood* quickly vaniſhes, and is ſucceeded by the *Voluptuouſneſs* of *Youth:* and in *This*, a Torrent of ungoverned *Paſſions* often threatens to carry all that is good before it. In the more advanced Years of Life, the Purſuits of *Ambition* or *Luſt* of *Power* and *Advancement*, take place; not without Danger of the Man's changing Truth, Sincerity, and Honeſty, for Art, Diſſimulation, and Deceit. And in *Old Age*, the *Power* of *Avarice* often ſhews itſelf in too abſurd a Manner to be deſcribed. This is the general State of Man. And therefore, Every Man may juſtly be ſaid to have ſo much need of ſuch a Motive to fortify Him, that he will, too probably, fail without it.

But

SERM. VI.

But They who are, by their Situation in Life, ſurrounded with more *Temptations*, and *Opportunities* than *Others*, have, of all Men, the greateſt Neceſſity for ſuch a Guard and Defenſe: Or, in other Words, They who have moſt Temptations to *forget* the great Day of *Accounts*, have, of all others, the ſtrongeſt *Reaſons* not to do it. Thoſe who ſee little around them, beſides the Hoards of Wealth, or the Gaieties of Power and Proſperity; whoſe *Stations* raiſe them above the common Level, and put them out of the way of many of the moral Advantages Others may meet with; whoſe Riches and Power invite the *Smoothneſs* of *Flattery*, but check the *Freedoms* of true *Friendſhip*; and whoſe exalted Degree of Life removes them from the leſſer *Fears* or *Motives* which ſometimes weigh with others: What remains for *Theſe*, who lye moſt open to the ſtrongeſt *Trials* of this Life, thoſe of Proſperity, and Pleaſure; of Profit, or Superiority; but to be allarmed into a Behaviour quite different from that of *Felix*, now before Us? Not to content themſelves with hearing Theſe Truths, and feeling a little preſent Commotion of Soul upon them; not to throw off the Conſideration from the *preſent* certain Time, to an *uncertain* Futurity; but to enter ſeriouſly into their own Breaſts; to think in earneſt

neſt of a Being ſuperior to Themſelves as much in Power, as in all other Perfections: and particularly to repreſent to themſelves that Solemn *Judgment* to come, in which They have an equal Concern with the Meaneſt of all their Fellow-Creatures; and in which they muſt appear as free from all Diſtinction of Superiority, as the loweſt of Mankind. The Strength, or Multitude, of the Temptations which have here ſurrounded Them, will then increaſe the Glory and Crown of their *Virtue*; but not take away the Guilt of the *Contrary*, in the Eyes of *Him*, who will judge all Men according to their Works.

In a word; If the Men in *high Stations* of every Sort; and the moſt involved in the Affairs or Pleaſures of Life, would but, now and then, find or force an Interval; wearied, as they muſt ſometimes be, with the Hurry of Buſineſs, or tired with the Circle of Amuſements; if They would, I ſay, now and then retire from all theſe; and think ſeriouſly of the Dignity and End of their Beings, and of their appearing in Judgment before that GOD whom They can neither deceive nor reſiſt; This would teach *Them* to deſpiſe every Inſtance of *Power*, *Profit*, or *Pleaſure*, inconſiſtent with Duty and *Morality*. This would give eternal Peace to their own

SERM. VI.

own Minds; and make their *Example* a Light, and an Incitement, to All below; who are ever looking up to *Them*, and forming their Manners on the *Model* of Those above them. And thus might *Virtue*, by degrees, spread itself through the *Inferior World*; and the Number be increased of Such as may be *Happy* both here and hereafter.

Of

Of CONSISTENCY *in all our* ARGUMENTS *about* RELIGION.

SERMON VII.

Preached before the KING, *March* 5, 1731-2.

GALATIANS ii. ver. 18.

For if I build again the Things which I destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor.

IN the Verses going before this, we have a very remarkable Instance of St. *Peter's* Misconduct, in contradicting, by Doctrine as well as Practice, what He himself had taught to be the *Design* of the *Gospel*; to the great Prejudice of it amongst the *Gentiles*; and this, out of *Fear* of some Zelots amongst the *Jews:* as appears evidently from St. *Paul's* Reproof, when He *said to him, before all,* (ver. 14.) *If Thou, being a* Jew, *livest after the Manner of the* Gentiles, *and not*

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

not as do the Jews, [*i. e.* without a Regard to the ceremonial Parts of the *Jewiſh* Law] *why compelleſt Thou the* Gentiles *to live as do the* Jews? or, Why do you teach and lead *Them* to the *Obſervance* of what you do *not obſerve* yourſelf? A Behaviour! which one would be almoſt tempted to think to have been, by the Deſign of Providence, recorded, that it might ſtand as a perpetual Warning and Monument againſt founding any Pretenſes to *Infallibility* upon a Succeſſion to *this Apoſtle* in particular. St. *Paul*, who records it, after ſhewing the *Inconſiſtency* of this Conduct with the Rule by which St. *Peter* had walked before, and by which the *Goſpel* had been propagated, goes on farther to ſhew the Chriſtian People, ver. 15, 16, 17. that the *Goſpel* is not to be cenſured, as a deficient Diſpenſation, not able to put us, out of the State of Sinners, into a State of Favour with GOD; but *They* only, who either teach, or receive, ſuch Doctrines, as are *inconſiſtent* with thoſe *Principles*, upon which They themſelves firſt received the *Goſpel*.

He then, in the *Text*, lays down this general Rule, by a common Figure putting Himſelf for any other Perſon, *For if I build again the Things I have deſtroyed, I make myſelf a Tranſgreſſor: that is*, For whoſoever doth, by his *Doctrine*, contradict thoſe *Firſt Principles* upon

upon which his *Religion* is founded; and, to get rid of a preſent Difficulty, again maintains or receives thoſe *Doctrines*, upon the renouncing of which his Title to the Privileges of his Religion depends; *makes Himſelf a Tranſgreſſor*; that is, puts Himſelf back into the Condition of an *Unbeliever*, and *Sinner*, not entitled to God's Favour offered by his Religion; and ſo hurts the Religion He profeſſes, by a Behaviour abſolutely inconſiſtent with it. And what the *Apoſtle* affirms here of Thoſe who *build again what they have once deſtroyed*, may, with an exact Agreeableneſs to St. *Paul's* Intention, be affirmed of Thoſe alſo, who *deſtroy*, or pull to pieces, *that which they had before built up*, as neceſſary to the Support of their *Religion*: becauſe there is exactly the ſame Reaſon for it; and becauſe what may be called *building up*, with reſpect to *Falſe* Principles, may be as juſtly expreſſed by the *deſtroying*, or pulling down, thoſe *Good* ones which are contrary to them. SERM. VII.

This being the *General* Reaſoning made uſe of by St. *Paul*, in the earlieſt Days, to oppoſe the Miſchiefs done to the *Goſpel*, by the inconſiſtent Behaviour of firſt ſupporting it, and inviting the *Gentiles* into it, by particular *Principles*, and then, as ſeeming Difficulties preſſed, declaring againſt thoſe very *Principles*;

SERM. VII.

Principles; and the reaſoning being at firſt unanſwerable, and in all Ages the ſame; it will be natural to apply it to our own Uſe, by obſerving, That the *Arguments* which alone can ſucceſsfully defend, or recommend, *Chriſtianity*, muſt be *conſiſtent*, and uniformly maintained: That whoſoever *builds up*, or maintains again, thoſe ſame *Principles* by the Deſtruction, or Confutation, of which alone *Chriſtianity* itſelf was at firſt, and ever muſt be, defended againſt its Oppoſers; and that Whoſoever *deſtroys*, and throws off thoſe *Principles*, upon which alone *Chriſtianity* could be firſt *built*, and ſupported; *makes Himſelf a Tranſgreſſor*; greatly hurts the Caſe of *Chriſtianity*, and furniſhes the Adverſaries of it with the moſt Popular, and, according to the Genius of the World, the moſt ſucceſsful, Pretenſes againſt it.

And as St. *Paul* thought it of great Importance to addreſs His Diſcourſe, and his Cautions, againſt ſuch *Inconſiſtencies*, to the *Chriſtian People*, not without ſome hurt to St. *Peter's* Character, for fear They ſhould either receive ſuch *Inconſiſtencies* as would vitiate their own Title to the *Privileges* of true *Chriſtians*, or come to reject the *Goſpel* itſelf, for the Sake of them: ſo, I hope, I ſhall be excuſed, if I follow ſo great an Example, and lay

before a Congregation of *Chriſtians*, the ſame General *Rule*, and the ſame *Cautions*, equally neceſſary now, as in His Days, to preſerve Them from being nominal Believers invain; or from rejecting *Chriſtianity* entirely. SERM. VI.

You ſee plainly, by this Time, that my Aim is, To bring that ſame Rule, of *Conſiſtency*, into the Service of *Chriſtianity* in *this* Age, which the *Apoſtle* made uſe of, in the *firſt* Age of the *Goſpel*; and to ſhew the great Diſadvantage ariſing to *Chriſtianity*, from ſwerving at any Time from it.

The Debates which have long been, and ſtill are, ſubſiſting, both in the *Popiſh*, and *Proteſtant*, World, give us Occaſion enough for this Leſſon. If a judgment were to be made from the Tenor of ſome of them, one would be apt to imagine an open War declared between *Reaſon*, and *Revelation*; an irreconcileable Enmity between the *Religion* of *Nature*, and the Religion of *Grace*, or *Favour*, propoſed in the Goſpel. I hope, for the Sake of *Chriſtianity* itſelf, that this neither is now, nor ever will be, the Caſe. For if ſuch a *real Contradiction* ſhould once be granted; it is very evident, Which of the two muſt ſuffer. But, to come to what I chiefly deſign,

I. The *firſt Obſervation* I ſhall make, is, That when *Chriſtianity* is recommended to any *Unbe-*

SERM. VII.

lievers, either as it lies in the *Gospel* itself, or as it is modified in any particular *Church* of *Christ*, the *Arguments* are, and must be, all built upon the *Right*, and *Duty*, of all Men to enter into an impartial *Examination* of their former Opinions. The *Appeal* is made to their common *Reason*. They are called upon to try, by the Rules of That alone, what is proposed to them, as from GOD, before they judge or determine about it. This very *Appeal* supposes the *Law* of *Reason*, that is, the *Religion* of *Nature*, to subsist before-hand, as the Measure of their trying whatever is offered to Them, as a *Revelation* from Heaven. It supposes the *invisible Things* of God; not only his *Being*, but his *Attributes* and *Perfections*, to be already *seen*, *from the Things that are made*; and from their Relations to one another; and particularly, from the moral Capacities and Powers of Man, evidently made accountable to His great *Creator*.

And there can be no other Method than This. For how can I possibly judge, whether any *Proposition*, or *Injunction*, be worthy of GOD, unless I first know the Nature and Perfections of that GOD, about whose Dispensations I am called upon to judge? And how can I possibly judge whether the *Proposal* offered be agreeable to his Original Law, the *Religion*

ligion of *Nature*, by which I am called upon to judge; unleſs there be ſuch a *Law* exiſting, either actually known to me, or within the Reach of my Capacity, *before* I form my Judgment about what is propoſed to me? SERM. VII.

This being ſo, it is evident that when Men are firſt invited into *Chriſtianity*, it is not by the way of *Impoſition* upon their *Faculties*, or *Senſes*; nor by depreciating, or throwing Contempt upon, their *Reaſoning* Capacity; but by acknowledging the Uſefulneſs of *Reaſon*, and the Excellence of the *Religion* of *Nature*. They are then told, that it is their Duty to *judge* of the Demands made upon them, in the Name of GOD; and that they can and ought to do this, by applying Themſelves to their natural Light, with an honeſt Heart; and by comparing what is now propoſed with that *Light*, which the ſame GOD has already given them, before they can be aſſured that Nothing is now required of them, but what is agreeable to their former Law: and All, We ſee, is to be built at firſt, not upon the Ruines, but upon the Evidence and Support, of *Reaſon*.

If any *Unbeliever*, in ſuch a Situation, ſhould anſwer to this Propoſal, when firſt made to Him, that he dared not truſt Himſelf in ſo important a Caſe: That the *reaſoning* Ca-

SERM. VII.

pacity in Man was too weak, to judge of the Ways of the great GOD; that the *Light* He had to see by, in this Case, was so dim, that He could not presume, without forfeiting all Title to Humility, to determine a Matter of such infinite Importance by it; and therefore, thought it more becoming Him to rest Himself where Providence had once lodged Him, rather than to enter into Searches, out of which his poor, weak *Reason*, would hardly bring Him sound and whole: If any One, I say, upon the first Proposal of *Christianity* to Him, should answer in this Manner; I doubt not, he would be told that this was only the Refuge of a lazy, unactive, or wicked Mind; that the eternal Law of *Reason* and of GOD, was not so obscure, or remote, as Vice and Indolence would fain represent it to be; that his *reasoning Capacity*, let it be what it will, was the only Measure of his judging for which He can be accountable; that GOD has a Right to call upon Him to make use of it, as the *Rule* of his Judgment, concerning all Pretensions of this Kind.

Thus evidently does it appear that Men are not, and could not be, invited into *Christianity*, but by a professed *Homage* paid first to the *Religion* of *Nature*, as to a *Superior* Judge, of GOD's Appointment, by whose Sentence the *Religion* of

of *Grace* (or *Favour*) is to ſtand or fall: and that the whole Weight of the *Latter*, lies upon the acknowledged Strength of the *Former*. The *Agents* of the *Church* of *Rome* themſelves, who *compaſs Sea and Land to gain a* Proſelyte, even *They* are forced to ſpeak to Men, at their *firſt* Application to Them, in this ſame Manner; and to make ſome Complements to the *Reaſon* of Mankind, as to the proper Judge of the *Firſt Step* neceſſary to their Succeſs. Thus much for the *firſt Obſervation* I had to offer. SERM. VII.

II. The *ſecond* will relate to the *Procedure* which too often is ſeen to follow this *Beginning*; but is quite *inconſiſtent* with it; and therefore, hurtful to the Cauſe of *Chriſtianity* itſelf. I will give only an Inſtance, or *Two*, of what I mean: but theſe ſufficient to ſhew of what Importance it is, to be perfectly *conſiſtent* in what We ſay upon ſo intereſting a Subject, as *Religion*.

1. If any of *Thoſe Perſons*, to whom the *Chriſtian Religion* is, in the Manner beforeſaid, recommended, ſhould take Occaſion, from the Excellency of Reaſon, and of the *Religion* of *Nature*, thus appealed to, as the Rule of Judgment, to argue againſt the *Probability*, or even the *Poſſibility*, of the *Chriſtian Revelation*, upon this Ground, that, there being already ſo good a *Law* open to Men, there

SERM. VII.

can be no *Neceſſity* for ſuch a *Revelation*. Suppoſing this, I ſay, (which has been the Caſe) can it poſſibly be *conſiſtent* with what was propoſed to theſe Perſons before; nay, muſt it not hurt the *Cauſe*, deſigned to be ſerved, for Them immediately to be told, as They ſometimes are, that *Human Reaſon* is very *weak*, at beſt; that the *Law* of *Nature*, or the *Religion* of *Nature*, is imperfect and inſufficient; or *obſcure*, and not within the Reach of our Underſtandings; and therefore, a *Revelation* was *abſolutely neceſſary* to the Direction and Salvation of Mankind? For, How quick and natural will the Reply to this be? Why then have you appealed to this ſame *Reaſon*, and this ſame *Religion of Nature*; and demanded of Us to judge from *Theſe*, whether *Chriſtianity* be worthy of GOD?

Human Reaſon, or the Capacity of a Man, be it what you pleaſe, is all the Light that Man has to judge by, concerning the Nature and Attributes of the *Great* GOD. By this *Reaſon*, weak as it is; weak as it can be painted out even ſince the Fall, We are required by You to judge of the *Goſpel* itſelf, by comparing it with the prime *Law* of our *Creator*, and with His known *Attributes*. But if we are too weak either to find out *That* Law; or if That Law, when found out, is no *Law* for

for Us to judge by; but either a dim, or a deceitful Light; either not ſufficient to ſhew Us Good, or leading Us (as ſome *Lights* do *Travellers*,) out of our Way: If this be the Caſe; We are brought back again, where we ſet out; and, if This be the State of *Human Reaſon*, with regard to That *Original* Law, and the *Attributes* of GOD, from which it muſt be deduced; We have Nothing to judge by, with reſpect either to the *Truth*, or *Expediency*, of the *Goſpel-Revelation*. And how ſuch a *Reply* can be well anſwered, I do not plainly ſee.

This is enough to ſhew, that the Cauſe of *Chriſtianity* itſelf may be unwarily hurt by our thus *pulling down* what We once *built up*; or *building up* what we once *pulled down*; in our *Arguments* relating to it.

If any aſk after *another Anſwer* to this Difficulty, and one quite *conſiſtent* with the Appeal made to *Reaſon*, or *natural Religion*, as to a previous *Law*, perfect enough to be the *Touch-ſtone* of all *Revelation*; I hope, ſuch an One may be eaſily pointed out. For, ſuppoſing the *Perfection* of this Primary Law of GOD; and granting the Plainneſs and Clearneſs of it to all attentive and well-diſpoſed Minds; and alſo, That a *Revelation* is *not* abſolutely neceſſary; I think it may be, with

SERM. VII.

the ſtricteſt Truth and *Conſiſtency*, anſwered, That, agreeably to all the Notions of Almighty GOD, taught by Reaſon and natural Religion, it is in all reſpects worthy of that ſupreme Governour, to do for the Happineſs of ſuch Creatures as He has made us, not only all that is *abſolutely neceſſary*, but what may be *excellently uſeful* to that End: That He may, with Glory to Himſelf, diſplay his paternal Regard for Us, by doing much *more* than what is *ſtrictly neceſſary* for our Eternal Good: That it is *Love*, and not the *Rigour* of Obligation, which is repreſented in the *Goſpel*, as the Moving *Principle* of his ſending *Chriſt* into the World; and that this *Love* is a *Principle*, which leads to greater and more Inſtances of *Beneficence* towards his Creatures, than what can be thought in *Juſtice* due, on his Part.

This may be illuſtrated by obſerving, That a *Father* amongſt Men, would be accounted but a very indifferent *Friend* to his *Child*, who, becauſe his Son might poſſibly find out the Ways of Prudence and Safety, by a conſtant Attendance to the *Light*, he Himſelf could ſtrike out, ſhould, upon this Account, refuſe to adviſe him, from his own *Experience*; or ſo much as to awaken him to a Senſe of any Danger, in his Entrance into the World: That, as it would not be eſteemed an uſeleſs

or

or weak Thing for a *Father* to do more than can be called *neceſſary*; but, on the contrary, a Mark of *Indolence*, or *Ill-nature*, not to do it in many Caſes; ſo it cannot be thought in Almighty GOD a *Conduct*, either fruitleſs or unreaſonable, but accompanied with the greateſt *Propriety* and *Glory*, to do more for his Creatures than He is *ſtrictly* obliged to do, in order to put Them into the True Way to all Good.

Thus may it be proved to be worthy of the *Supreme* Governour, to conſult their Happineſs, by calling upon them, in an *extraordinary* Manner, to forſake that *Vice* and *Idolatry*, which they might, without ſuch an *Interpoſition*, ſee to be contrary to *Reaſon*; and to practiſe that whole Syſtem of *Morality*, the *Obligation* of which, it is granted, They *might poſſibly*, without this, find out to be their Duty. Nay, It may be added, that, conſidering the Importance of the *Religion* of *Nature*, and the willful *Negligence* and *Corruption* of the Bulk of Mankind, it was very *probable*, *à priori*, that a *Good* GOD would once at leaſt, interpoſe to awaken his reaſonable Creatures, by ſome extraordinary Method, to the Study and Practice of *That Religion*. And ſurely, it muſt be acknowledged that the *Goſpel*, if We conſider it ſeriouſly, propoſes what is at leaſt moſt *uſeful* to Mankind, by making *this* very *Religion* of *Nature*

SERM. VII.

Nature a main Part of what it requires; and by revealing plainly the Motive of a *Judgment to come*, in order to secure all Obedience to it.

This, I think, must be allowed to be a satisfactory Way of treating the *Difficulty* beforementioned; and particularly on this Account, that it is a Way perfectly *consistent* with all our *Appeals* to natural *Religion*, and all that can justly be said of the Excellency of it; and therefore, a *Way* which preserves to Reason all its Weight, and to *Revelation* all the *Dignity* it claims.

2. I will now mention a *second* Instance of a very *inconsistent* Conduct with regard to the *Christian* Revelation. When an honest Man, moved to the *Enquiry* into it, by the *Appeal* made to the sufficient *Strength*, not to the *Weakness* of *Human Reason*; called to it by the *Trust* reposed in Him by God, of looking after his own Soul, and his own Happiness; encouraged to it, by his acknowledged Capacity to find out and judge of the *Attributes* of the Great GOD, and his *Right* to reject all *Doctrines* about them, but what are agreeable to the Dictates of *natural Religion*: *When*, thus invited and encouraged, a Man with an honest Mind, compares the Contents of the *Gospel*, as preached by *Christ* himself, and Those immediate Disciples whom He called to

to do it, with the immutable *Law* of *Nature*, and the inviſible Things of GOD; and is juſtly come to this *Concluſion*, that the *Goſpel* is worthy of God, and accompanied with ſufficient Evidence: *When*, after He is come thus far, to his Satisfaction, He thinks himſelf ſtill to have the ſame Right to conſider, and judge of, the Meaning and Extent of the *Propoſitions* and *Precepts*, recommended in the *New Teſtament*, or taught by Thoſe who profeſs to preach nothing elſe, by the ſame Rule of Reaſon, and GOD's firſt Law: how ſurprizing muſt it be to Him, to be ſtopt, and told, that, having come to this good Reſolution, and entered Himſelf into the *Church*, or Society of *Chriſtians*, it is now Time to acquaint Him, that, after his embracing the *Chriſtian Religion*, there will be very little need of his troubling himſelf in that Manner: That He has been called upon, indeed, as a Perſon entruſted with the Care of his own Soul; but that He is now to be eaſed of that Trouble, and to devolve it upon *Others*: that He has been treated as a Perſon endowed with Underſtanding, and required to embrace *Chriſtianity*, as far only as his own Underſtanding ſhould perceive and find every thing in it worthy of GOD tranſacting with Man: but that now he muſt lay aſide this Character of an *Underſtanding* Being, and

SERM. VII.

and must not think it hard to embrace what is dictated by Others, though quite unintelligible to Himself; or, which is worse, absolutely inconsistent with all his own well-founded Notions of GOD, and of his Duty? How surprizing, I say, must this be? And yet, as *surprizing* as This is, it is the open avowed Language of the whole Church of *Rome*; and, I fear, the unavoidable *Consequence* of what *Some*, who have departed far from that *Church*, unwarily teach and inculcate.

But is not This again, *destroying what we have built up*; and, in another View, *building up again what we have destroyed?* And, what is most to be lamented, with Men who have not Strength of Mind enough to get out of these Difficulties, and yet Understanding enough to see them; the Damage falls upon the *Gospel* itself. With all others the *Case* is plain, and the *Answer* easy. If We are fit to be trusted with our own Souls, and we are justly called upon, as a Duty owing to *them*, to judge of what is proposed to Us, as from GOD; We are as fit still to judge of the Nature and Extent of our Duty, as we are still as much obliged to take Care of Ourselves, and of our own Happiness. If We had no Capacity to understand any *Propositions* expressed in Words; we could never be called upon by a Righteous GOD to judge of them

them in order to receive them. If the *whole* were unintelligible to Us; it would be of no more Concern to us, than if the *Form* of *Words*, pretending to convey it to Us, were only a Crowd of inarticulate Sounds; and We, no more intereſted in it, than if we were of the Herd of *Animals*, uncapable of Reaſon. And, by the ſame juſt Rule, if any *Part* of what is propoſed to Us, be utterly unintelligible to Us, *that Part* is juſt as much out of our Sphere, and equally of no Concern or Influence, with Regard to Us: and We ought not, if this be the Caſe, to be called upon to judge at all in ſo important a Matter. As therefore, in all other *Sciences*, truly ſo called, amidſt all the moſt intricate Difficulties and Differences, it is expected that the *Words*, on each Side, ſhould have a Meaning to them, and be underſtood, without which, no Uſe could be made of them: So, much more, in *Religion*, which is a *Science* of infinite Uſe to our Practice, nothing can have Influence, that is not known; and nothing can be made known to Us, that is not expreſſed in Words, which are intelligible to Ourſelves; and therefore, to be judged of by Ourſelves.

And if we go from Speculations, and Principles, to *Precepts*, no one can deny but that the true Meaning, the exact Bounds, the Nature

SERM. VII.

ture and Extent, of the *Figurative*, or *General* Expreſſions, in which almoſt all Duties are laid down in the *New Teſtament*, cannot poſſibly be fixed, but by the Attributes of God, and the Law of Reaſon and Society; which is the *Religion* of *Nature*. And this *Religion*, neither our *Saviour*, nor His *Apoſtles*, ever profeſſed completely and explicitly to delineate, in all its Parts and Meaſures; but They conſtantly appealed to it, and invited the World to regard and practiſe it. On the contrary; if this be ſo, that, in embracing the *Chriſtian Religion*, we muſt diſcard that *Reaſon*, by which alone we were led to embrace it; and if that *Underſtanding*, which we were told was ſufficient to judge of the *Relation* between the Attributes and Firſt Law of GOD, and the *Revelation* of the *Goſpel*, is now in ſome Parts of *Religion*, to act no more the Part of a Director to Us: May it not be ſaid, too juſtly, that this *Procedure* is no better than leading Us by the *Brightneſs* of *Light*, into the *Blackneſs* of *Darkneſs*; and a *Method* of making our *Underſtanding* itſelf the Inſtrument of guiding Us to a State of no *Underſtanding*? Nay, Will it not from hence be urged farther, by Some, that They have been impoſed upon in the whole *Proceeding*; and ought to go back to that *Point*, at which They began, when They

They were first *invited*, and (if I may use the Expression) *enticed*, into *Christianity*, by the *Complements* then paid to the *Religion* of *Nature*, as the *Original Light* constituted by GOD for us to judge by, of all possible Schemes of Religion.

I have not Time to name more *Instances* of the same Sort. But these *Two* are sufficient to shew the just Ground I had to observe that *Christianity* itself must suffer by the *Inconsistencies* of Those, who, in their Arguings about it, do thus *build up again what they had destroyed, or destroy what They had built up.*

I will now conclude with a few *Remarks*, which plainly follow from what I have said.

1. They who inadvertently treat *Reason*, and the *Religion* of *Nature*, in the Manner I have now described, if We go on to speak in St. *Paul's Figure* of a *Building*, seem to have totally forgot the Beginning and Progress of the *Work*, in this whole *Fabrick* of Religion. They treat the *Law* of *Reason*, as if it were only the *Scaffolding* of the *Building*; and, like the *Scaffolding* of *Other* Buildings, to be taken away with the *Rubbish*, at the *End* of the *Work*. Whereas, it is the very and only *Foundation*, upon which They themselves are forced, and glad, to raise the *Building* at first. And, like *other Foundations*, so absolutely necessary to the standing, as well as to the first erecting, of it, that

if

SERM. VII.

if you take *this* away, the *Building* itſelf muſt fall. It may *ſeem* to *Themſelves*, indeed, to remain; and They may pleaſe themſelves with the Thoughts of living ſtill in the *upper* Rooms: But it is from that Moment a *Fiction* only; the *Fiction* of *Fancy*, and a mere *Caſtle in the Air*. The *Rain* need not deſcend, nor the *Floods* come, nor the *Winds* blow and beat upon this, to weaken and deſtroy it, like the *fooliſh Man's* Houſe in the *Goſpel*, built upon the *Sand:* for, upon taking away the Foundation, This muſt of itſelf immediately fall; not having ſo much as *Sand* to ſupport it.

2. As the *Law* of Reaſon, even in fallen ſinful Man, is GOD's *original Law*, to the Teſt of which *Revelation* is, of Neceſſity, ſubmitted: Methinks, there ought to be, in all Perſons concerned, the *greateſt Fear* of offending GOD, by depreciating *This*, which may moſt juſtly be called His Primary Revelation of his Will, under the *Pretenſe* of a more than ordinary *Zeal* for any *Secondary Law* of his, which cannot be received, or ſo much as known, without *This*. And this Fear muſt be the more reaſonable in a *Chriſtian*, if it be conſidered, That whoever attempts, (let his Deſign be never ſo honeſt and pious,) to extinguiſh, or diminiſh, the Splendor of GOD's *Original Light*; if He could ſucceed, may be

be ſure of *darkening* the *Second Light*, which He thinks to ſet up on high, and make brighter: becauſe the *Light* of *Nature* is the *Light* of the *Goſpel* alſo, as it ſhews Men the Way to it; and as it throws its Beams upon every *Page* of it. And I will here add, what ſeems too often to be forgot, that the *Religion* of *Nature* is not the *Opinion*, or *Whimſy*, of this or that *Philoſopher*; no, nor what any, or all of them put together, have *actually* ſaid, or may ſay: but it is truly that Law of GOD, which may juſtly be collected, by His reaſonable Creatures, from the immutable *Reaſons*, and *Relations* of Things; and is the *ſame Law*, as one of the Heathen Writers well obſerves, at *Rome* and at *Athens*; that is, in other Words, at *all* Places, from *one* End of the World to the *other*.

3. Though it appears from what has been ſaid, that the bad Conſequence of ſuch *inconſiſtent* Methods, is, or may probably be, the *turning away* of Many from the *Faith* of *Chriſt*; yet, it is fit that ſuch Perſons ſhould know, that This Fault in *Others*, will not wholly excuſe *Them*; becauſe They may ſee, if They pleaſe, that This cannot be charged upon the *Goſpel* itſelf, but only upon the Weakneſs, or Wickedneſs, of Frail Men. On the other hand, how great the Guilt is of Thoſe who lay any *Stumbling-Blocks* in the Way of *Chriſtianity*;

SERM. VII.

let our *Saviour* himſelf teach us. *Wo unto the World, becauſe of Offenſes. For it muſt needs be that Offenſes come:* that is, The Nature of Man is ſuch, that *Stumbling-Blocks* will be laid in the *Way* of the *Goſpel. But Wo unto that Man, by whom They come.* And this *Wo* is more particularly deſcribed by our Lord, in a Manner, pathetic enough to awaken all Perſons concerned, to put a ſtrong Guard upon their own *Zeal*, or their own Paſſions; leſt They ſhould, even under the Influence of a well-meaning Heart, at any Time fall into this Condemnation.

4. As the *Religion* of *Nature* is ſuppoſed to be a ſufficient *Rule*, and in a ſufficient Meaſure within our Reach, when we are called upon, as a Duty, to examine into *Chriſtianity* by it; it evidently follows, that Whoſoever takes moſt Pains, and moſt ſucceſsfully, to *delineate* the *Religion* of *Nature*, in all it's Branches, and all it's Extent, is ſo far from being an *Enemy* to the *Goſpel*, in the Event; that He really is the *Man*, who does what the *Goſpel* came to awaken the *World* to do; and what is neceſſary towards the explaining and ſettling the *moral Duties* mentioned in it: and furniſhes out a *Syſtem*, which, if it be founded upon *Truth* and *Reaſon*, becomes immediately a Part, an eſſential, certain, and indiſputable Part, of the *Goſpel*

pel itself; being *That Part*, upon which the *great Account* to come is so often there represented chiefly to turn. SERM. VII.

There can be no greater Service done to *Christianity* itself, than what arises from such Labours of Wise and Serious Men. And it is with a View to the same Service, that I have, at this Time, used my best Endeavours that the *Religion* of *Favour* and *Mercy* may not suffer by any Disgraces unwarily put upon the *Religion* of *Nature*. In a word; if We have a real Regard and Concern for *Christianity*, let us shew it by the Value we set upon that *Religion* of *Nature*, by which alone we could be rightly conducted to it; and without which We cannot interpret, or understand, any of it's Doctrines and Precepts, when We have received it: Nay, which is now incorporated into it, and itself made the *Law* of *Christ*. Let us not encourage, or receive, Any one *inconsistent Method* of treating the *Christian Religion*: For such *Inconsistency* is, in Truth, the great Strength of *Infidelity*, on one hand; and, in some Cases, of *Popery*, on the other. But, let us act that *consistent* Part which alone can make *Christianity* sit easy upon a thinking Mind; or recommend it to the World of *Unbelievers*.

If we conscientiously do this; neither *building again* any Part of that System of Darkness

SERM. VII.

which We in effect *deſtroyed*, when We, upon our own Conviction, embraced *Chriſtianity*; nor *deſtroying* the leaſt Part of that Syſtem of *Reaſon* and *Light*, which We may be ſaid *then* to have *built up*, as the Strength and Support of it: And if We add to this that beautiful *Conſiſtency*, in the *Practice* of All that is good, which is the *Duty* and *Ornament* of a *Chriſtian*; We ſhall, by this whole Conduct, do the greateſt Honour and Service to the *Goſpel*; and ſecure to ourſelves the *Happineſs* attending ſuch a Behaviour in *this* Life, and the *Reward* promiſed to it, in That which is to come.

No

No continuing City here, &c.

SERMON VIII.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 23, 1734-5.

HEBREWS xiii. 14.

For here have We no continuing City; but We seek one to come.

THE Life of Man, in this World, is often repreſented, by the *Author* of this *Epiſtle*, and other ſacred *Writers*, under the *Life* of a *Traveller*, a *Stranger*, or *Sojourner* here below: and this World itſelf, as the *Road* to another. And, in Truth, this is a very proper Repreſentation of the Caſe. *Heaven*, that Seat of eſtabliſhed Happineſs above, is our *Home*; and ought to be ſo accounted by Us. Thither all our Steps ought to be tending: and through this World muſt we go, as through a Road, before we come to it. In our Jour-

SERM. VIII.

ney, We have all the Unhappineſſes of *Travellers*. We meet with an inconvenient Lodging, and ordinary Entertainment, for ſome Time. And if it be otherwiſe, yet we muſt certainly leave it; and no more think of ſettling ourſelves in it, than a *Traveller* does of fixing his *Habitation* upon the moſt beautiful Spot of Earth he meets with in his Way; or in the beſt accommodated Houſe upon his Road. The little *Reſt* we have, if we have any, is, as in a *ſtrange* Place, diſturbed and interrupted with much Noiſe, and Hurry, and Diſorder; and, like that of *Travellers*, to be left, perhaps, with the next Morning's Light; and ourſelves to be called Home to a more fixt and durable State. *For here have We no continuing City: but We ſeek one to come.*

From this *Alluſion* to the Life of a *Traveller*, by which the Uneaſineſſes of *our Life* in *this* World, are illuſtrated; and from the *Words* of the *Text*, particularly ſetting forth the Uncertain, and *Unſettled*, Condition of Man here below; it is my Deſign to take Occaſion, without any critical Examination into their *Connexion* with the Words before and after them, to conſider, more at large,

I. The *unhappy* Condition of Man in this uncertain State, where *he has no continuing City*; ſuppoſing

ſuppoſing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

II. The Grounds we have firmly to expect, and ſeek, ſuch a State of Happineſs, in *a continuing City to come:* And,

III. Laſtly, the Importance, and true Uſe, of the foregoing Obſervations.

I. The *unhappy* Condition of Man in this uncertain State, in which *He has no continuing City*; ſuppoſing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

1. To be brought into the World (by the Will of a ſuperior Being) weak and helpleſs; to paſs our firſt Years in a State of abſolute Dependence upon the imperfect Wiſdom, or ſtrong Paſſions, of Others; to be nouriſhed, through *Infancy* and *Childhood*, with much Care and Trouble to Thoſe about us, and much Uneaſineſs and Pain to ourſelves; to be educated, through our *Youth*, and through all the Hazards and Storms of that impetuous Seaſon, according to the good or bad, the juſt or miſtaken, Notions of Thoſe who claim the Right of conducting us to the *Gate*, at which we are to chuſe our own Path, and at the Entrance of which *our own Life* properly begins.—To enter upon this Life, now to be led under our own Conduct, perhaps big with the Thoughts of Nothing but the Enjoyment

SERM. VIII.

of uninterrupted *Good*; and to find ourſelves ſoon ſurrounded by a Crowd of *Evils*: To go on, and ſtill be hoping for ſomething ſatisfactory, and ſtill diſappointed; Unhappy, by miſſing the Aim in View; or more curſed, by obtaining it; either not finding what we ſought, or finding what appeared *Happineſs* at a Diſtance to be Emptineſs, or perhaps, *Bitterneſs* itſelf: — To inherit the *Pains*, and *Diſeaſes*, of our *Forefathers*; or to ſuffer under new ones of our own: To bend under *Afflictions* properly belonging to Ourſelves; or to partake ſenſibly in thoſe of Others, in whoſe Happineſs our own is wrapt up; or at leaſt, to ſympathize with our Fellow-creatures, in the many Scenes of *Diſtreſs*, forcing themſelves into our View, on which Side ſoever we caſt our Eyes: And, after paſſing ſuch an uncertain and tempeſtuous Sea, in which one Wave is continually preſſing upon another; and one Danger attending to take the Place of another: *i. e.* after paſſing a *ſhort* Life of *Folly* and *Vanity*; of *Expectation* and *Diſappointment*; of imperfect Health, and uneaſy Pain: After all this, I ſay to ſink into Nothing; to fall into a State of utter Inſenſibility: — The *Experience* of the *One*, and the *Proſpect* of the *Other*, ſeem too great a Burthen for a rational Creature to bear.

2. Nor are the Unhappineſſes and Uncertainties of human Life confined to any particular *Cli-*

mates

mates of the Earth, or Degrees of Men. Go to those Parts, which are sometimes called *Happy*; where the Sun shines warm, and the Earth is always ready to pour forth its Abundance: and you will find, in the *Moral* World, little but *Violence*, and *Iniquity*, triumphant; in the *Political*, the *Oppression* of the Powerful, laying waste the Rights, and living upon the Spoils, of Those below them; and in the *Natural*, Distress and Want spread over the most delightful Countries, through the *Sloth* and Effeminacy of their Inhabitants; or the Violence of Tempests and Earthquakes frequently scattering Terror and Ruine all around them. And if You return to those Parts where Power is made useful and lovely by Justice and Law: How often will you find them torn to pieces by intestine Quarrels; always disturbing, and, sometimes, totally destroying, the Peace and Security of private Life? SERM. VIII.

3. If we let our Thoughts go up to the more elevated Stations of Life; are *They* more securely fenced about from *Evils*, by Providence; or more defended from *Uncertainty* and *Unhappiness* than Others? Is the Sleep of Those who possess them, sweeter, or less interrupted by anxious Cares and Fears, than That of their Inferiors? Or, are Diseases and Death kept farther and longer from *Them*, than from the Meanest? Far otherwise. The Outside, indeed, is

SERM. VIII.

is all dazzling and pompous: But *within*, are the Cares, and Perplexities, and Unhappineſſes, naturally attending ſuch Stations, either through the Imperfections inſeparable from human Nature; or from the Envy and Diſatisfaction of Others. And were their Eſtate a thouſand Times more eligible; I might ſay, leſs pitiable, than it is — Nay, were *Power* nothing but *Happineſs* unmixed; were *Government*, Pleaſure without Pain; and the ſincere Cares of it always repaid with Duty and Gratitude: Were *Riches* the Inſtruments of *Good*, untainted by any Marks of *Miſery*; were *Grandeur* as gay *within*, as it is gaudy *without:* yet, have the Poſſeſſors no Security from Evils of another Sort, and *no continuing City here.* The Diſeaſes and common Calamities of Life are ſufficient, often, to make the whole *Scene* of all theſe united, *Inſipid*, or *Nauſeous:* and whether They do, or not; the *laſt Enemy* muſt come; and to *his* Force, by the Appointment of God, the beſt built Fabrick of human Happineſs muſt yield.

If This, therefore, be really the *unhappy* and *uncertain* Condition of Man in this World; and, from the higheſt to the loweſt, no One exempt from it; what does it become Us to do? Shall We ſtop here in this Diſtreſs, and place our only Happineſs in *Deſpair* of Any? Or ſhall we ſpend the Vigour of our Minds in unmanly Com-

Complaints of our unhappy Portion; and loſe Sight of all Happineſs, becauſe it will not attend Us, upon *this* tottering and uneven Stage? If we are wiſe, or know what it is to be made reaſonable Creatures, in our Degree; Let us rather try, what was propoſed in the next Place, SERM. VIII.

II. Whether this *Unhappineſs* itſelf, in *this* State, will not guide our Thoughts to Happineſs *hereafter*; and the Experience of *having no continuing City here*, lead us to the reaſonable Expectation of *One to come?*

1. The *firſt Thought*, upon this Head, will ariſe from our being brought into Life, and placed in this World, by a *Superior Agent*, a GOD of all poſſible Perfections. If this Supreme Director be a Being, not only of all *Power*, but of all *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*; not acting by arbitrary Will, but by the Maxims of unclouded Reaſon: Whatever Darkneſſes there may be, in our finite Underſtandings, with regard to the Deſign of every Part of the Creation; yet, This muſt be certain if any thing in the whole Comprehenſion of Nature be certain, that Such a Being could not poſſibly command us into Exiſtence, with ſuch Faculties as We poſſeſs, with any Deſign ſeparated from That *Godlike* One, of conducting Us *finally* to *Happineſs*; whatever *State* of *Trials* and *Uneaſineſſes*, He may *firſt* appoint Us

SERM. VIII.

Us to pass through. It is unworthy of such an *Agent*, whose *Goodness* must give Counsel to his *Power*, to suppose that He could have had any *Glory* of his own in view, but what was perfectly consistent with a just Regard to the *Happiness* of such Beings, when He resolved to send Them into this World. The contrary Notion of the *Glory* of *God* is the Foundation of the worst Errors about his Dealings with his reasonable Creatures; and cloaths Him with *Power*, only to make Him their *Terror*, and not their *Delight*.

If God, therefore, who *then* brought us *first* into Being, *when* we *first* tasted of Life, and were free from all Possibility of wilful Offence on our Part, could be supposed to throw us into this State, in which so few have any Taste of Good, and so many are almost devoted to Pain and Misery; and, at the same Time, to open to our Thoughts no other Scene but This: might it not justly be said, that such a Proceeding as this, is no better than to force many kinds of Evil, and many Degrees of Misery, upon *Creatures* void of all *Offense*, without the least Hope or Pretense of so much as any Recompence for them? But if the *Greatest* Being in the Universe be the *Best*; as He certainly is; let us be afraid of imputing such a Conduct to Him; and, under that Fear, let us do Justice to his Attributes

in this Inſtance; and, with Aſſurance, conclude that He would never have created intelligent Beings, only to ſport a little, and ſuffer much, in ſuch a World as *This:* and, conſequently, had in his View Another and better State after This, when he firſt commanded us hither. SERM. VIII.

2. Let us go one Step farther, and, if we may be allowed to do it, let us ſuppoſe a Being created with ſufficient Degrees of Intelligence; and immediately placed, by his Creator, in ſuch a *Point* of *View*, as to be able to ſee through all the Mazes of human Life, and ſurvey all the Imperfections, and Miſeries, and Uncertainties, here below; and to judge of them juſt as well as *Experience* enables the moſt unprejudiced amongſt Men, to do. Let us ſuppoſe, after ſuch a full View, it were left to his own Option, whether He would be content to paſs through the ſame ſeveral Periods of Life which the Inhabitants of this World do, and to take the common Lot of Mankind here below, as his whole Portion; whether He would chuſe this certain Conflict with *Evils*, and ſmall Chance for any *Good*; and, *after* the Conflict, be reduced to a State of *Inſenſibility*; or to be thrown back now *immediately* into his former State of the ſame *Inſenſibility*. Were this the Caſe, I hardly think that the bare Name of *Life*, which is but an empty Sound when ſeparated from all Hope of

SERM. VIII.

of ſettled Happineſs; and much worſe, when connected with a great deal of Miſery; that the mere *Name* of *Life*, I ſay, could poſſibly tempt him to chuſe a Part in ſuch a State, and then to *ceaſe to be*; rather than to accept of the ſame Sentence, without going through the *Evils* of *this* State, *before* it.

But then, put the Caſe that a Scene of *Eſtabliſhed Happineſs* ſhould be opened to the View of this Being, to ſucceed the *Vanities* and *Unhappineſſes* of the preſent; and this *Happineſs* declared to be reſerved for ſuch as ſhall paſs through the Other with *Virtue* and *Honour*: This would alter the State of the Queſtion; and would be a ſufficient Inducement to any ſuch Underſtanding Being, to undertake the Conflict; and to be content to tread the uneaſy and uncertain Path of human Life here below; when he found it to lead to the Certainty, and Duration, of *Good*, and *Happineſs* hereafter.

This way of *Diſcourſe* is not founded on a mere *Curioſity* of prying into the Secrets of unfathomable Wiſdom; but a ſober Attempt to juſtify the Ways of God to Man: And theſe He himſelf, in all *Points*, in which moral *Juſtice*, *Equity*, and *Goodneſs* are concerned, muſt be ſuppoſed to have ſubmitted to the Judgment of his intelligent Creatures, when He made Them *moral* Agents, and obliged Them to govern themſelves by

by the same Rules of *Justice*, *Equity*, and *Goodness*, which He himself observed.

My Meaning, therefore, is not to pretend to judge of all the Views of infinite Wisdom, which would be *Arrogance*; but to draw an Argument from the *Moral Attributes* of God greatly conducing to his Honour: *viz.* That the *Best* of Beings, being unalterably happy in Himself, cannot be justly supposed to have commanded into Being a Number of intelligent Creatures, void of all Offense towards Him, upon any such unhappy Terms, as no One of them could have consented to, had it been possible for him to have judged of it: And, therefore, that such a Being ought not to be supposed to have forced Us into the poor *Habitation* of this World, without designing us for Another, and a Better.

3. I will go on, in the next Place, to argue from our peculiar Capacities, directed to the finding out the Existence and Nature of the Supreme Being; and fitted for the Worship of Him, and the Imitation of his moral Excellencies. For how *vain*, or worse than vain, are all these *Capacities*, if they be not designed by Him, who gave us them, to lead to his Favour in a future State? The *low* Concerns of *Animal* Life, and even of *Social* too, might have passed on, in a way worthy enough of this present Life, without our being made capable of the exalted Notions of

SERM. VIII.

a God, and of That true *Religion*, which cannot properly ſubſiſt, without the Expectation of a *future State*. If there be ſomething *real* to anſwer to what We can diſcover by the Powers given Us; then are our *Capacities* worthy of God who is their Author. If the *contrary* be ſuppoſed; how greatan Abſurdity is by this fixt upon *Him*, who endowed Us with theſe Capacities?

Much the ſame may be ſaid of thoſe reaſonable and reſtleſs *Deſires* of almoſt All Men; longing to continue in Life; and travelling perpetually towards greater and greater Degrees of Happineſs, and made capable of them by their good Creator. Theſe muſt all be accounted the fruitleſs *Efforts* of vain *Capacities*; unleſs *Life* be Happineſs; and deſigned to be our laſting Good.

If we add to Theſe, the common and well-known *Complaint* of all Ages, that the Affairs of *this World* are conducted, under the Inſpection of *Providence*, in ſuch a Manner, that the Beſt of Men, even in the ordinary Courſe of Things, are often ſeen to groan under the Weight of the ſame common Calamities of this Life which Other feel; and beſides theſe, in ſome extraordinary and unnatural Caſes, to ſuffer all the Evils that the Malice of wicked Men can bring upon them, for the Sake of a good Conſcience: If We add, I ſay, ſuch Conſiderations; The Argument

gument from hence will be This, That the Beſt and moſt Equitable of all Beings muſt deſign, and act, conſiſtently with that amiable Character; That He cannot do this, without putting as great a Diſtinction between the *Beſt* and the *Worſt* of his reaſonable Creatures, in *Happineſs*, as there is in *Behaviour:* and therefore, there being no ſuch ſettled diſtinction in *this* State, but much Miſery left for the Virtuous and Upright often to ſtruggle with; there muſt be, in the great Deſign of the Creator, *another* State, in which *Virtue* and *Happineſs* ſhall be ſeen inſeparably united. Without this, there can be no Appearance of *Proportion*, in the *whole moral Syſtem:* and with it, all the juſt Relations and Habitudes of Things are exactly preſerved. Upon which Account we may juſtly conclude it to be ſo deſigned. SERM. VIII.

Theſe *Conſiderations* are not thin *Speculations*, ſpun out of the *Cobwebs* of the *Schools*, or built upon the Subtleties of *Metaphyſics*; but *Arguments*, founded upon the *Nature* of *God*, and the *Nature* of *Man*, and the ſenſible *Experience* of our preſent State: and particularly, upon thoſe Notions of the Supreme Being, which it is our Duty to embrace, and conduct ourſelves by: and therefore, ought not to be entertained as the Dreams, or Wiſhes, of good Men wearied out with the Evils of

SERM. VIII.

this Life; but as *Concluſions* drawn from the plaineſt and moſt rational Principles.

To theſe We *Chriſtians* ought to add the Aſſurances given by *Jeſus Chriſt*, of a *Future State* of Rewards and Puniſhments, without which his great Deſign had been all Vain and Fruitleſs: and theſe *Aſſurances* confirmed, beyond all reaſonable Doubt, as the Voice of God himſelf, by that Series of Wonderful Works, and that *Reſurrection* from the *Dead*, which were the Demonſtrations of his being ſent by God, into the World, to ſhew Mankind the true and only *Road* to their *eternal Happineſs*, in a *continuing City to come.*

III. The *Uſe*, to be made by us, of what has been ſaid, is the only remaining Point: and the Point, indeed, in which we are moſt concerned.

We have ſeen the *Conditions*, upon which we live in *this* World: how certainly Pain, Affliction, and Adverſity, in all their various Forms of Miſery, are our Portion here; and how ſmall a Part of our Time any Thing that has the Appearance of *Happineſs* takes up. We are, at beſt, rather *Amuſed*, than *Happy*, in this Life: rather diverted from the continual Senſe, or Dread, of *Evil*, than filled and ſatisfied with any *Good*. There are, indeed, Images of

of Pleaſure, like Phantoms, dancing before our Eyes; and, like Phantoms, ſoon diſappearing. But, even with regard to Theſe, we are rather taken up with the Purſuit of what we have not, than ſatisfied with what we have. And, ſuppoſing ourſelves poſſeſſed, as we falſly call it, of all the Goods of this World; in the midſt of *Life*, we are in *Death*. SERM. VIII.

In theſe Circumſtances of Diſtreſs, what *Beings*, made capable of higher Things, as We are, can forbear to wiſh for a more ſettled State of Good? And if we wiſh for it, our greateſt Intereſt will incline Us to attend ſeriouſly to the *Arguments* which prove it; and to yield up Ourſelves to the Force of that Evidence they carry with them: And if we be convinced of the *Reality* of ſuch a *State*, we cannot be ſo inſenſible as not to deſire a Place in it; and, if we really deſire it, we cannot but be ſollicitous to take the true Method of obtaining it: that only Method of fitting ourſelves for it, pointed out to Us by the *Religion* of *Nature*, and of *Chriſt*: I mean the uniform Practice of all Virtue, which is the *Imitation* of GOD, the *Beſt*, and moſt perfect, of all Beings.

This is the true and only *Uſe* of what has been ſaid, that can poſſibly be made,

SERM. VIII.

with any Appearance of Reaſon, by any *Creature*, brought into Being by the Supreme Father of all Things, and endowed with all the Qualities neceſſary to the conſtituting of a *moral Agent*.

The Thoughts which I have now laid before You, are of infinite Moment to every *reaſonable Being*, condemned at preſent to *this* World, in which He *has no continuing City*; but framed ſo as to *ſeek One to come*.

The *Loweſt*, and the moſt Unhappy, of all the Sons of *Adam*, may receive Support and Comfort, from this Leſſon, which ought to be ever in his Mind, That the Evils of his wretched Condition, his Pains, and Sickneſſes, and Poverty, and all the Diſtreſs attending it, cannot laſt longer than his ſhort Life; and that, after a Period put to his Life and his Miſeries together, He has as good a Title to plead to a durable State of unmixed Happineſs in a never-ending State, or a *continuing City to come*, from his patient and blameleſs Behaviour here below, as the moſt elevated, Proſperous, Rich and Powerfull, of all that tread on this Earth; and that his Voice will *then* be as well heard, and as much regarded, as the *Voice* of Any of Thoſe, who perhaps thought too much of their *Superior* Exaltation above Him, in *this* State. Thoſe in the middle State of Life, will feel the great Advan-

Advantage of the *Thoughts* I have propoſed, throughout their whole Conduct, in all their Buſineſs, and every Stage of Life. SERM. VIII.

But what is moſt proper to be ſaid of Them, in this Place, is, that They are Thoughts of equal Importance to the higheſt *Prince*, and the meaneſt *Subject*: to Thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by the *Honours* of this World, and Thoſe in the *common* Order of Life. For what can, indeed, be more awful and moving, and therefore, what more uſeful, to Thoſe in *exalted Stations*, than to conſider ſeriouſly, that, at the opening of that *Future* never-ending State, All the moſt dazling Diſtinctions of this World ſhall ceaſe; and none remain, but that *eſſential* One between the *Good* and the *Bad*; the *Virtuous* and *Vicious*: That no Rank ſhall then be regarded, but the Rank of Moral Excellence; no Guards ſhall attend the Great, but their Innocence, or true Repentance; and no Praiſes be heard from the Mouths of Flatterers, but from the Voice of their good Actions only: That in *this continuing City*, their Station ſhall be allotted, not according to their exalted *Power*, or *Grandeur*, or *Riches*, but according to their Uſe of them, here below; and that their Godlike Behaviour in this World, ſhall be the only Title to their *Thrones* of *Glory*, in the World to *come*?

SERM. VIII.

And let me add, that I would not permit Myſelf to recommend ſuch Thoughts as Theſe, in this Audience, If I were not fully perſuaded that they are *Thoughts*, which will blunt and ſoften the Thorns and Cares of *Power*; will throw Comfort into the Retirements of the *Great* and *High*; and ſcatter Innocence and Honour through the whole *Syſtem* of their Actions: Which will moſt ſafely conduct them through the Troubles, and Allurements, of their preſent Situations; will animate them to be like God himſelf, in the exerting all their Capacities for the *Happineſs* of the *World* around them; and give them an Ambition to excel in every thing praiſe-worthy here, in order to their obtaining a Seat in that State of *future Bliſs*, which is repreſented in the *New Teſtament*, as a *Kingdom unſhaken in the Heavens*, far out of the Reach of all ſuch Commotions and Diſorders, as are ſeen in the *Kingdoms* of this World; and as a *continuing City*, the Seat of Eſtabliſhed Happineſs for ever.

Chriſt's

Chriſt's YOKE, *Eaſy*; *and* BURTHEN, *Light*.

SERMON IX.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 27, 1736-7.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my Yoke *is Eaſy, and my* Burthen *is Light.*

IT is not improbable that our *Bleſſed Lord*, when he ſpake theſe and the foregoing Words, was looking upon Crowds of *Travellers*, coming up to *Jeruſalem*, upon ſome great *Feaſt-Day*; many of them loaded with *Burthens*, and all tired and weary with their *Journey*: and that, according to his uſual Cuſtom in other Caſes, He took Occaſion from hence to ſpeak to *Them*, who now wanted *Reſt* of *Body*, concerning another Sort of *Reſt*, of far greater Conſequence; the true

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

Rest and Happiness of reasonable Creatures: calling their Minds from the low Concerns of their *Bodies*, to the higher ones of their immortal *Souls*; and from the Bustle and Hurry of this World, to the Calm and Quiet of true *Religion*.

But, whatever the immediate *Occasion* of this Discourse might be; the *Intent* of it is so important, and so general, that every Man, in every Age, is equally concerned in it, who feels in his Breast any Degree of Reason and Reflexion. For it is very evident that, in this and the two foregoing *Verses*, our Lord is inviting Men to take upon them *this Religion*, and to imitate *his Example*, as the happiest Course they can chuse. At the 28th Verse; *Come unto Me, all ye that Labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest.* Come unto me all ye who are wishing for *Happiness* and *Rest*, but are still in a State of Uneasiness and Disquiet, by pursuing it in wrong Methods; and I will shew you the only way to that *Rest*, which is worthy of your Searches. Verse the 29th; *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.* Enter upon the *Practice* of my *Moral Rules*; or, in other Words, imitate my Example, in the Practice of every Virtue, and particularly of *Meekness* and *Humility*,

mility, which are in their nature *Reſt* and *Quiet* themſelves; and you will quickly find yourſelves in that State of Happineſs you are ſeeking. Then follow the Words of the Text, verſe 30; *For my Yoke is Eaſy, and my Burthen is Light.* For that *Syſtem* of *moral* Duties and Obligations, which I am come to inforce and lay upon you, is of ſuch a Nature, as to be much more agreeable, and eaſy, to ſuch a Creature as Man is; and much more conducive to the Quiet and Happineſs of ſuch a Being; than a Freedom from it, or an Engagement in any Courſe of a contrary Nature, can be.

Thus far theſe Words of our Bleſſed Lord may, juſtly and naturally, be extended. For He plainly appears to ſpeak to Such as are in a *reſtleſs* and unquiet Condition wanting and wiſhing for *Happineſs*; from his offering to ſhew them the only way to it. He plainly intends what He ſays of *his Yoke*, to be underſtood of the *Moral Rules* and Obligations of his Religion, becauſe He himſelf inſtances in *two* of them; *viz. Meekneſs*, and *Humility*. He plainly appears to comprehend, in what He ſays, his whole *Syſtem* of *Virtue*, from his calling it by the Name of *his Yoke* and *his Burthen*; which muſt mean his *Whole* Moral Law. And He certainly intends what he ſays of the *Eaſineſs*

SERM. IX.

Eaſineſs of his *Yoke*, and the *Lightneſs* of his *Burthen*, to be underſtood in Compariſon of any other, ſet in Oppoſition to it; becauſe he ſtill calls it a *Yoke* and a *Burthen:* Words, which ſuppoſe it not to be void of all preſent Difficulty, and Uneaſineſs. And the *Whole* is plainly meant, in Compariſon of the *Yoke* and *Burthen* of *Sin*, or *Immorality*; becauſe He inſtances, expreſsly, in the *Practice* of the *moral* Virtues mentioned, as the Way to Happineſs.

I may, therefore, very reaſonably, take Occaſion from theſe Words, to conſider how truly and juſtly it is ſaid, that the *Yoke* here ſpoken of ſits *eaſier*, upon ſuch a Creature as Man; and the *Burthen* of practical Religion *lighter*; than any of a contrary Sort: or, in other Words, to ſhew that the *Practice*, implied in *This*, is a much ſurer way to his Happineſs, than That of *Vice* and *Immorality*. In order to this,

I. The *firſt* neceſſary Step is, to conſider what a Sort of Being Man truly is.

II. The *ſecond* will be, to enquire what Circumſtances are neceſſarily required to the making any *Courſe* of *Action* eaſy and happy to ſuch a Creature.

III. And the *third* will be, To ſhew that an uniform Courſe of *Virtue*, or practical Religion,

on, has a Title to all these Requisites; which the Course of Life, *opposite* to it, cannot pretend to.

1. As to the *first* of these; it is but Folly to spend our Time in vain Complaints of the Imperfections of our Nature: That we are not made, on one hand, with Abilities to practice all *Virtue*, in every Circumstance of Life, without any Inclination, or Temptation, to the contrary; or, on the other hand, capable of enjoying unbounded Pleasure, wherever it offers itself, without any Restraints from within, or any ill Consequences from without. Our Business is to consider ourselves as we truly are; and not as we could wish ourselves to be: as Creatures, related to the inferior Part of the *Creation*, in our *Bodies*, and *bodily Appetites*; but greatly distinguished from it, by a Faculty within us, which enables Us to find out the Existence of a GOD above Us; the Excellency of his Nature; the true Glory, and Duty, of a rational Being; and the Expedience, and Becomingness, of One Sort of Conduct above another. For to consider *Man*, either as a Creature merely *Animal*, without any Direction in his Nature but to the *Animal Pleasures*; or as a *Creature* merely *rational*, without any Bias from Flesh and Blood, or any Temptation from the present Scene of Things; is a very *partial* and unequal Consideration;

SERM. IX.

deration; and likely to carry us but a little way in the *Enquiry* now before us.

2. After this, the *Second* Step is to consider what *Circumstances* are requisite to the making any Course of Life easy, and agreeable, to such a *Creature* as Man, certainly, is.

And here, there are *two* Things, which seem to me to have a just Claim to This, *viz.* That this *Course* of *Action* should be agreeable to the best and governing Part of his Frame: And, That it should either have no Difficulties, and Distresses, of any Sort, in it; or that those Difficulties, and Distresses, should be, at least, sufficiently compensated by Advantages, either present, or future, or both.

1. To make any Course of Action, *easy* and happy, to *Man*, it must certainly be agreeable to that *rational* Principle within Him, which, He is sensible, has a Right to guide and direct Him in his Actions.

The *Liberty* of a reasonable Being is his *Happiness:* and the *true Liberty* of such a Being, cannot consist in an unbounded Freedom from the Obligation of all Laws; but in the ready and settled Habit of following that *Principle*, or that *Authority*, which is, evidently, entitled to the Rule and Government of Him. For by this means it is, that a Person, or intelligent Agent, comes to do what Himself approves

proves of; what Himſelf recommends to his own Practice, *before* Action, and delights in and applauds, *after* it. On the contrary, it is the *Slavery* of *moral Conduct*, which is moſt of all to be dreaded by ſuch a Being: And the moſt hard and intolerable *Yoke*, and the moſt grievous and oppreſſive *Burthen*, to Him, muſt be a *Life*, in which He is hurried, by the Command of an *Inferior* Principle, got looſe from the Influence of the *Superior*, into ſuch a *Scheme* of Actions, as Himſelf can never ſeriouſly approve, *before Execution*; and cannot but wiſh undone, *after* it. It is with *Moral* Liberty, as it is with *Political* Liberty, in its Perfection; which is greatly miſtaken, and ill-treated, when it is ſuppoſed to be *Licenticuſneſs* abſolutely free from Rule; whilſt its very Eſſence conſiſts in a ready and uniform Submiſſion to ſuch *Principles*, or *Perſons*, as have a right to govern us; and govern us by ſuch Laws as Reaſon, (conſulting the Good of the whole Society) declares it to be beſt for us to obey.

If we aſcend higher in our Thoughts to That Being who holds all Perfection in Himſelf, it is no Preſumption to ſay, what He accounts his own Glory; That it is the *Liberty* of Almighty GOD himſelf, to be conſtantly, and without any Deviation, governed by the

SERM. IX.

eternal and immutable *Laws* of Good and Right, Juſt and Equal. From whence we may juſtly argue, that no Being capable, in any Degree, of knowing any Part of thoſe Laws, can have any other *Moral Liberty* than *This*; or deſire any other, upon any reaſonable or honourable Terms.

Conſequently, on the other hand, it muſt be the Eſſence of *Moral Slavery* to Man, to be arbitrarily governed by ſuch *Powers*, as He knows to have no Right to any Command over Him; or hurried into Action, by ſuch Laws and Commands, as He himſelf cannot think of in any other Light than as Contradictions to the Dictates of the Superior Principle, and inconſiſtent with his own Peace, and all Order within Him. Neither does the preſent tranſient *Pleaſure* of obeying them, in any Inſtance, at all alter or affect this Truth: unleſs *Pleaſure*, againſt Reaſon, can change Evil into Good; and alter the Nature of Things, ſo as to turn *Bitter* into *Sweet*; the *bitter* Reproaches and Reſentments of an offended Mind, into the *ſweet* Approbations of its *ruling* Principle.

It may, therefore, be juſtly inferred, from what I have already ſaid, that it is impoſſible that any *Courſe* of *Action* can be an *eaſy Yoke*, or a *light Burthen*, to *Man*, in which He is ever contradicting the Superior Principle within, and the

the only one He has to conſult, and to be influenced by; and is guided by the impetuous *Rule* of *Another*, which was made to obey: becauſe, ſuch a Courſe, muſt neceſſarily beget Self-Condemnation, and the worſt Sort of inward Diſtreſs; and make the Man his own Enemy, and his own Puniſher. But,

2. To the making any Courſe of Life *eaſy*, and *happy*, to ſuch a Creature as *Man*, I will be free to own it not to be quite enough, that it be perfectly agreeable to his *beſt* and governing Part; but neceſſary alſo, that it ſhould either have no greater Difficulties, and Diſadvantages, in it, than what are certainly found in That oppoſite to it: or that Theſe Difficulties, and Diſadvantages, ſhould be ſufficiently and fully compenſated by Advantages, *preſent*, or *future*, or *both*.

This needs no Sort of *Proof*, or *Illuſtration*; that, if any *Courſe* of *Action* has *Difficulties* in it, next to inſuperable; or *Uneaſineſſes*, next to intolerable; there can be but little Hope of *Conſtancy* enough, in ſuch a Creature as *Man*, to keep Him ſteddy in it: But that if the *Difficulties* in it are not worthy to be named with the *Advantages* and *Encouragements* attending it; this will render it an agreeable Taſk to every well-informed Mind. If the *preſent* Advantages of it be but *ſmall*; yet, if the *fu-*

SREM. IX.

ture ones be vast and durable, tho' they be supposed only probable, This will weigh greatly against the present Difficulties of it. But if it should be found to have a more sure and probable Title than the contrary, to all present Advantages, worth the seeking after; and the surest allowed Title to all *future* ones; only supposing us to be Creatures accountable to that GOD who made us: These Considerations, joined to what I have said, under the former Head, will be more than sufficient to place it far above any *Course* of *Life* that can be opposed to it; and recommend it to the Choice of Men, as the most *easy Yoke*, and *lightest Burthen*; or as the Course of Life, much more free than any other from all the Evils that are most to be avoided by such a Being.

III. Let us now proceed to the *third* Proposition I laid down; *viz.* That a settled Course of *practical Religion*, or *Virtue*, has a much surer Title to all these Requisites before-mentioned, than that of *Vice* and *Immorality*.

And here, I believe, it is an uncontested Truth, that the habitual Practice of *Virtue*, is the Practice fully approved and applauded by our *best* and *superior* Faculty; by that *Principle* within Us, which, we are sensible, was given to rule and govern our Actions. And this single Truth will make a vast Difference between

between the Practice of *Virtue*, and that of *Vice*; That, to the *Former* a Man is constantly directed by serious Consideration, and by a willing Choice, which is the Result of it; that *in* it, He is accompanied with his own Applauses, and the secret Approbations of his Conscience; that *after* it, He is entertained with the Pleasure of a sweet Reflexion, and the Praises of unpolluted Reason: That, on the contrary, to the *Latter* He is never, in any one Instance, led by the serious Considerations and Arguments formed by Reason and Judgment; that the more he considers, and reflects, and reasons, the more he is dissuaded *from* it; that he is hurried *into* it by quite the contrary Principle; that he is accompanied *in* it by frequent Reproaches of his own Reason; that he is often pursued *after* it by the Lashes of a guilty Conscience, and by the stinging Thought, that he has done what he can never justify at the Tribunal of his own Heart, or the more impartial one of Him who made him what he is.

Of this one might make the wickedest of Men, not void of all common Sense, Judges themselves: whether it was serious Consideration and Reflexion that made them Sinners; whether it was the last Result of their *Judgment* and *Reason*, that the Path they tread

SERM. IX.

would lead them to their greatest *Happiness*; or, whether the Course of *Vice* be the Course agreeable to their superior and governing Principle. On the contrary, let the lowest Order of good and virtuous Men witness, whether their *Virtue* ever gave them any Uneasiness, upon the Review of it; whether the Sentiment of sorrowful Repentance was ever stirred up in their Minds, by the Thought that they had been just, or temperate, or humble, or charitable; or, whether They ever felt any Remorses within, upon looking back upon the virtuous and righteous Part of their Lives. They will give Testimony, every one of them, that if they ever have felt any Uneasiness of that kind in their lowest and most desponding Moments; this has been owing to the Suspicion, that They have not done enough in the Cause of *Virtue*: not that they have been so good, as they have been; but that they have been no better. On the other hand, if any Ease of Mind, in a religious Sense, has been experienced by any habitual *Sinners*; it is undeniable that it has never arisen from any *Pleasure* resulting from the Review of a *vicious* Course: but from their deep Sorrow, on account of their past Conduct; and from the secret Hope they sometimes entertain, that GOD will accept such Sorrow instead of that *Virtue* and *Holiness*,

Holineſs, which they mourn the want of. All SERM. which puts it beyond Doubt, that a ſteddy *Courſe* of *Virtue*, is the *Courſe*, entitled to the conſtant Approbation of our beſt Part, and to the Favour of that *Principle* within, which was given to rule and direct us: and that the *Courſe*, contrary to this, is accompanied with all its Diſlike, and Diſpleaſure. IX.

2. If we now proceed to the *Second* of Thoſe *Requiſites* before-mentioned, "That to make any Courſe of *Life*, agreeable to ſuch a Creature as Man, it ſhould either have no *Difficulties*, or *Diſtreſſes*, in it; or, that *they* ſhould be ſufficiently compenſated by *Advantages*, *preſent*, or *future*, or *Both*; We ſhall, I hope, find it alſo true, that a Life of *Virtue* has manifeſtly the Preference, in this View, that the *unnatural Diſcouragements*, it may, in ſome extraordinary Caſes, meet with, are more than compenſated by the Advantages attending it; and that the general Rule, in the *natural* Courſe of Things, is greatly in its *Favor*.

To this Purpoſe, let it be conſidered, That the *preſent Advantages* of it are as certain, as Any of the moſt certain *Pleaſures*, or *Profits*, of *Sin*; and of much more Importance to ſuch a Creature as *Man* is. It conſtantly, and without Variation, brings along with it a *Peace*, and Serenity, and Joy of Mind; never known

SERM. IX.

or felt without it. It tends, naturally, to the *Health* of that Body itſelf, upon which ſome place the higheſt Value; to as good and creditable a *Situation* in Life, as ought to be wiſhed; to ſuch a *Reputation*, as a Man would chuſe upon the beſt Conſiderations: And, in the Enjoyment of the Goods peculiar to this World, being bounded only by *Reaſon* itſelf, it is always free from thoſe many Embarraſſments, Diſappointments, Uneaſineſſes, Anxieties, Perplexities, and preſent Miſeries, to which the unbounded Enjoyment of the ſame Goods is every Day ſeen to expoſe Men.

On the other hand, the Practice contrary to this, if it has any Effect upon the *Mind*, (as it muſt have, as long as the *Mind* exiſts) it is to diſquiet and diſcompoſe it, by ſuch well-grounded *Uneaſineſſes*, as are themſelves *preſent Unhappineſs*. The Effect of it upon the *Body* is, in many Caſes, to bring on *Ruine*, and *Diſſolution*, before it's Time; to fill it with more Diſtempers, and invite more Calamities into it, than would, otherwiſe, be experienced. The Effect of it upon the Name and *Reputation*, is no better; if the *beſt Reputation* be the Eſteem of the Good and Wiſe. And upon Men's *Eſtates*, the Influence of *ſome* Vices is as bad, in leſſening them, and bringing them to Nothing; and of *Others*, in making them uſeleſs

uſeleſs to the Poſſeſſors themſelves. And if this be plainly the Caſe, that, excepting in ſome very *unnatural* and extraordinary Circumſtances of Affairs, the Cauſe of *Vice* has nothing to boaſt of, even in this *preſent* State; and that the *Courſe* of *Virtue* has, in itſelf, a conſtant Fountain of *inward* Eaſe, and a *natural* Tendency to all the *outward* deſirable *Happineſſes* of Life; here, at this Point, all the Boaſts and Pretenſions of *Vice* ceaſe at once. SERM. IX.

It is *Virtue*, alone, that can look forward, with any Courage and Satisfaction, into a *future* State of Things. *Vice* is no *Rival* there: nor does it ſo much as preſume to think of any Claim to *future* Rewards; but, as long as Thought remains, is often allarmed with the Fear, or Suſpicion, that, as *Puniſhment* is due to it, *Puniſhment* will hereafter overtake it. I ſay, it is a State of *Virtue*, alone, that can make Us feel a Pleaſure in hoping and thinking, That, as ſurely as there is a GOD, who made Us reaſonable Creatures capable of the Guidance of *Moral Rules*; as ſurely, as He has made us with all the Tokens of Creatures *accountable* for our Actions; and as ſurely as there is a *State* after this poor Life: ſo ſurely will the Favour of GOD, and all the proper Marks of it, be ſhewn to the truly Virtuous; and the *Rewards* of *another* and *better* Life,

SERM. IX.

more than make up for all that was grievous in *this*, to the most unfortunate and oppressed of all the Lovers and Followers of it. And We *Christians* know that it was the great *Design* of our *Blessed Lord*, to bring *Life* and *Immortality*, in a future State, to *greater Light*, than they were viewed in, before; in order to make his *Yoke* still the *more easy*, and his *Burthen* the *more light*, to All who should take his Religion upon them.

I have thus endeavoured to induce you to chuse the *Yoke* and *Burthen* spoken of, in the Text; that is, the *Obligations* of *practical Religion*, or *Virtue*, before the *Slavery* of *Vice*; the only *Rival* which stands in Competition with it. I have compared their several Pretensions: And I am not sensible that, in this Comparison, I have given one Grain of Weight to the Scale of *Virtue*, which does not, undeniably, belong to it; or taken from the *contrary* Scale any one Advantage which it could possibly claim.

And now, if I may conclude with a *Word* more peculiarly proper to *this Assembly*, and *this Place*, in which I now speak; I will add, That, if what I have been laying before you be the Truth of GOD, of such Importance as to be worthy of your Attention; it cannot but be the immediate Conclusion from the Whole, in

the Breaſt of every Perſon of *High Rank*, here preſent, that a ſettled Courſe of *Virtue* muſt be the only Courſe of *Honour*, to ſuch a Being as Man is; and that the more eſtabliſhed any Man is, in this Courſe, the greater Title he has to be called a *Man* of *Honour*. The Word *Honour* ſtill remains amongſt us, applied to the Behaviour of Men; and, if the *Ideas*, annexed to *Words*, be not yet entirely confounded, it can mean Nothing diſtinct from, much leſs contrary to, *Virtue*. Nor are the Differences of Things yet ſo loſt, but that the *Word* is ſtill deſigned, in all the Inſtances of Conduct and Action in which it is uſed, to ſignify a Degree of *Virtue* even exalted above the common Pitch; and exerciſed in Caſes, to which human Laws, and human Eyes, often cannot reach; but the Right and Reaſon of the Thing do: as in thoſe of *Gratitude* to *Benefactors* known only to Ourſelves; *Truth* to the moſt ſecret Promiſes; *Juſtice* and *Equity*, as ſuch, where *no Court*, and no Man's Judgment, can enforce it. Theſe, and many other Inſtances, ſhew an Acknowledgment, in Thoſe who uſe the *Word*, of the ſtrict Obligation to *Virtue*, as the Dictate of the rational Faculty; and of the utter Diſagreeableneſs of the contrary to that *ſecret Principle* in Them, the

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

Power of which, in some such Instances, they cannot forbear to feel, and follow.

This is, in Effect, to acknowledge, what is a most certain Consequence, that a Man of *Virtue*, and a Man of *Honour*, through the whole System of *Morality*, are only two Expressions for one and the same Thing: and that it is a *Contradiction* to the *Nature* of Things, as well as the greatest *Abuse* of *Language*, to put asunder what GOD and Reason have joined together.

And, indeed, what can be the *Honour* of *Man*, but that *Practice*, which is unvariably agreeable to his superior and ruling Principle? Let him not claim any other, for fear He should be found to claim the *Honour* of *lower Animals*, instead of *his own*; and to boast of *That*, in which many of the *irrational* Kind, could They act in our World, would greatly excell him. For, in *Men* themselves, it requires but a very low Capacity, and little more than *Inclination* free from the Restraints of Reason and Reflexion, to be *dishonourably wicked*.

This is no wandering from the *Words*, and *Doctrine*, of the *Text*. For I mean to infer from what I have been now saying, that *Virtue* must be the *Easiest Yoke*, and the most *Light Burthen*, to a Mind sensible of the Rules of the strictest *Honour*; because this, we see,

is ever acknowledged of some particular *Instances* of it; and therefore, cannot be denied of any other *Branches* of that *God-like System*, which relies, in every Part of it equally, upon the same eternal and immutable *Laws* of *Right*, and *Truth:* and, on the other hand, that a Course of *Vice*, and *Immorality*, must be the most *galling Yoke*, and the most *heavy Burthen*, to such a Mind; because it is a most uneasy Contradiction to those same *Rules* of *Honour*, by which the Man acknowledges himself, of *Right*, to be governed, and preserved from *Moral* Evil, in *some* Cases; which *Rules* extend equally to *every* Branch of the whole *System* of *Iniquity*.

And here, let me repeat, That no imagined *Pleasure*, or *Profit*, can alter this Truth: because Nothing of that Kind can turn *Unreasonable* into *Reasonable*; nor, consequently, the *Dishonour* of an *intelligent* Being into its *Honour*. Nor can all the Ensigns and Trappings of *outward Greatness* (in another Sense, sometimes, called *Honour*,) make it otherwise. They will always render *Vice* more deformed, and more disagreeable, in the Eyes of all who think rightly; because it is truly more out of *Character*, in such a Garb, than in the *Coarser* Dress of the *Lower* World: but They can never give to it the peculiar Privilege of *Virtue*; which,

SERM IX.

which, alone, ever was, and ſtill remains, the true *Honour* of all the Great and Noble of this World, as well as their Duty and Happineſs.

I have thus, in the beſt Manner I could, explained and enforced a very important Declaration of our *Bleſſed Lord*, concerning the Practice of all the *Moral* Duties of His holy *Religion*: and, I hope, in doing this, I have been preaching *Chriſt*, and his *Doctrine*. It is the *Glory* of His *Goſpel*, that the great Deſign of its Founder was to direct his Followers to the whole *Syſtem* of *Natural Religion*, or *Morality*. His *Doctrine*, upon which He reſts their *Happineſs*, is *Virtue*. His *Life* was an unſpotted Example of all *Virtue*. His *Death* is the greateſt Argument for *Virtue*. And his *Sufferings* are *blaſphemed*, when they are repreſented as deſigned for the Advantage of any *Sinners*, but ſuch as have forſaken their Sins, and are returned into the Paths of *Virtue*. Let Every One, therefore, who profeſſes to follow *Chriſt*, as his *Maſter*, *learn of Him*; and take his *Yoke*, and his *Burthen*, upon Him: And *he will find Reſt to his Soul*, in a Conduct agreable to his own Mind, in every Part, and every Relation, of Life, *here*; and unſpeakable Happineſs, *hereafter*.

Of

Of PERSECUTION *on Account of* RELIGION.

SERMON X.

ROM. xiv. 4.

Who art Thou that Judgeſt Another Man's Servant? To his own Maſter, He ſtandeth, or falleth.

IN a former [a] Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I obſerved, that the Foundation of all *outward Perſecution*, for any ſort of Differences about Religion, was laid in the Mind *within*; that the firſt Step was the *Inward* Act of *Cenſuring* and *Judging* our Neighbours, on Account of what They eſteem, as any Part of the Worſhip or Service of God: But that the Evil ſeldom ſtopped there, but was generally obſerved, when Opportunity offered, SERM. X.

[a] *Note*, This was the *Second* Sermon upon this Text. See the *Firſt* in p. 47. of this Volume.

to

SERM. X.

to break out into open *Violence* to Men's *Bodies* or *Eſtates*, for the Sake of their Conſciences.

This being the Caſe, the firſt Step I choſe to take, was to attempt the Cure of that wicked Diſtemper of Mind *within*; or, to ſhew the inexcuſable Iniquity of the *Inward Act*, before it can proceed to *Outward Evils*. This I endeavoured to do, by obſerving,

1. That we are not qualified *thus* to ſit in *Judgment* upon One Another.

2. That it is not the Province of *Us*, who are but *Fellow-Servants* to the ſame *Maſter*.

3. That it is a Province, which our Great and Common *Maſter* hath peculiarly reſerved to Himſelf. And,

4. That it is our great Buſineſs to prepare for the *final Judgment* of *Ourſelves*, and not to be found *judging* Others.

But, as Men have been, in all Places almoſt, and in all Times, obſerved to proceed from *Inward Cenſures*, to the Application of *Outward Force*, and *Worldly Evils*, in Matters purely *Spiritual*, and belonging to *Conſcience*; I ſhall now purſue this Subject farther; and endeavour, in the plaineſt Manner poſſible, to ſhew the great and unpardonable Iniquity of all *Outward* Perſecution, on *Religious* Accounts: And this, by ſuch Conſiderations, as will

at

SERM. X.

at once determine *That*, and answer the chief Pretences alledged by Any Men for it.

Now, this Great Evil of *Persecution* is, by All such *Patrons* of it as speak seriously of believing the *Gospel*, and regarding the Salvation of Mankind, always avowed, to be built upon the Great Importance to All Men, that They should be Believers of the *One* only true Religion, and found Members of the *One* only true *Church* of *Christ*, in order to their *Eternal Salvation*: And upon the *Duty* of bringing Men to their own Happiness, by *Force* of *Outward Evils*, when other Methods fail. I know, there is *Another* Reason, or Excuse, for it, sometimes mentioned; taken from the Peace and Quiet of *Society*, and of the Christian World about Us, which is pretended to require such an Agreement, as this Outward Force is designed to produce and establish. But *this*, (not to mention that it is built upon a great Mistake, directly contrary to Truth and Experience) being merely of a *political* Nature; and plainly founded upon the Wicked Maxim, that it is of no Importance what is *True*, or *False*; what is pleasing to Almighty GOD, or not; and throwing *Religion* quite out of the Question; I shall not now enter at all into the Merits of so weak and worldly a Pretense; but shall only consider the *Former*: which,

SERM. X.

which, being the moſt honourable Pretenſe for *Perſecution*, is always the moſt avowed: Few caring to own that they mean nothing but this World, and their own *Power*, or *private Intereſt*, in it. This then being plainly put upon the Importance of right Sentiments about Religion, and the true *Church* of *Chriſt*, out of which there can be no Salvation,

I. The *firſt* Conſideration which offers itſelf, is this; that ſuppoſing, the *Importance* of *Truth* would juſtify Us; yet, without the Certainty of our being *Infallible*, in what we ourſelves hold to be *Truth* in *Religion*, it would be moſt unreaſonable, and inexcuſable, to act againſt our *Fellow-Creatures*, by the Application of *Outward Force*. *Perſecution*, you may know from all Hiſtory, takes a great Compaſs, and is ſeen to exert itſelf, not only with Regard to the Fundamental Truths of all Religion; but, (We may ſay, chiefly and moſt commonly,) for the Support of Thoſe *many* inferior, or leſſer Points, in which the Thoughts of ſerious and ſober Men ever were, and ever are likely to be, different. And if, in Theſe, or any of Theſe, We make a wrong Judgment; then, Every Step we take is not only out of the Paths of *Charity*, but of that *Truth* likewiſe, the Name

Name of which we make uſe of to cover our Uncharitableneſs. SERM. X.

This is ſo plain, in the Caſe before us, that the *Romaniſts*, who generally take Care to make their Scheme of *Abſurdities* conſiſtent with it ſelf, *firſt* aſſume to themſelves an *Infallible* unerring *Judgment*, before They venture to affirm to You, that You ſhall believe, and profeſs, what They think fit. For They well know that, if They ſhould own Themſelves, to be liable to Errors, and to be *fallible* Men, in all conteſted Points of Religion, They could not claim the Submiſſion due only to *Infallibility*, in Matters of *Faith* and *Worſhip*: and ſo, They chuſe rather to lay their *Foundation* in *Impudence*, than to loſe the Benefit of *worldly Terrors*, for the inlarging the *Bounds* of their Church.

But ſuch an *Outrage* upon the common Senſe of Mankind, cannot be carried by mere Dint of *Aſſurance*. For it comes to no more than This, "We affirm that We are *infallible*: and therefore, you are bound to obey Us, as ſuch: neither can They themſelves, who utter this Oracle, tell Us, in what *Place*, and *Perſon*, or *Perſons*, We ſhall certainly find this *Infallibility*.

This therefore, is a *Voice*, little becoming ſuch a Creature, as *Man* is, even the moſt elevated

SERM. X.

elevated of all ſo called: who every Day finds within himſelf the Experiences of a Creature, capable of being deceived; and ſtanding in need of all favourable Allowances, both from God, and his Fellow-Creatures. But,

II. Suppoſing that We could be, not only morally certain, but infallibly ſecure, that All the Points which We ourſelves embrace as Parts of Religion, were really True, and Irreprehenſible; the next thing to be conſidered is, That it is naturally impoſſible, by outward Evils, to force the *Inward Aſſent* of Others; or to make their real Sentiments about thoſe Points conformable to our own. For the *Aſſent* of the *Mind* to any thing as Truth, muſt be upon ſuch Evidence, as makes it appear to be Truth. Now nothing *External* can make any Propoſition appear True to a Man's Underſtanding. Whatever doth that, muſt be of a kind, congenial to the Mind within: To which outward Force bears no Similitude, nor Relation. It is *Reaſon* and *Argument*, either real, or ſuppoſed, that works *within*; and which alone muſt do ſo, till the Nature of Man, and of Truth, be totally altered.

If a Blind Man were put upon the Rack, day after day; and intenſe Torments applied to Him, for the great Crime of not ſeeing the *beautiful*

beautiful Colours, which his Neighbours ſee. This might extort from him a Proteſtation, that He doth ſee them; nay, it might create in Him ſuch an Inclination to ſee them, that He might *fancy*, He did ſo: But it is plainly true, that it would not make Him really ſee any thing like them. He would ſtill be the ſame *Blind Man*; uncapable of ſeeing, and unacquainted with *Colours*, till All Defects ſhould be rectified, and All Things requiſite to the Purpoſe of *Sight*, ſhould be rightly diſpoſed.

Thus it is, in the greater Caſe before Us. All Men are pleaſed to ſuppoſe, that They themſelves ſee and perceive *Truth*, and that Others are blind, and ſtupid, juſt ſo far as They differ from Them. Be it ſo. Let *Us* be wiſe and knowing; and let the Herd around us be all Blindneſs, and Ignorance. Muſt it follow, therefore, that the Application of *Outward Evils* will work that Perſuaſion in Others, which will make Them, altogether ſuch as we are, in the Inward Sentiment? No. It may create a Wicked Prevarication, a falſe Proteſtation, an impious Hypocriſy; all ending in *Irreligion* and *Atheiſm*, which We muſt in great Meaſure anſwer for: Or, It may go ſo far, as to make Creatures, diſtracted with the Intenſeneſs of Pain, fancy at laſt that They ſee what Others ſee, and believe what Others believe. But this can

SERM. X.

be no more than Imagination, or Fancy; becauſe it is plain that the *Medium* made Uſe of, is not the proper Mean, or Inſtrument, to convey a real Perſuaſion. *Force* is not *Evidence*; *Torment* is not *Argument*. And therefore, whatever it may work, tho' bearing never ſo much Reſemblance to *Perſuaſion*; yet it cannot be *That* it ſelf in Reality, becauſe That can no more be the Effect of any thing merely external, than the *Sight* of a *Blind Man* can be reſtored by tormenting him in an improper Place, and Manner.

This is ſo plain, that Thoſe who profeſs to argue for any ſort of *outward* Penalties, or Inconveniences, upon Accounts merely Religious, if They ever touch this Argument, only alledge, that thoſe outward Things duly applied, may make Perſons the more willingly attend to Argument and Reaſon: For ſo Every thing is called by Men, which Themſelves hold, or would appear to hold. And from this very *Conceſſion* it is plain, that it is the *Evidence* and *Argument*, which is the Mean of this ſuppoſed Conviction; and that even by Themſelves nothing but this is ſuppoſed, or can be ſuppoſed, to work a real Change, in the Perſuaſion, and inward Sentiments of any Man. And this being the only Gloſs that can be put upon this Proceeding,

III. It

SERM. X.

III. It is to be conſidered that, ſuppoſing *This* were poſſible; it is neither the Buſineſs, nor the Intereſt of *Truth*, to be received, by ſuch Methods, or in ſuch a Manner. It is much *better*, and more pleaſing, in the Eyes of Almighty God; if We can judge at all, either of his Nature, or of his *Revelation* by *Jeſus Chriſt*; That any Man, in the Uprightneſs and Sincerity of his Heart, ſhould remain in an *Error*, than that He ſhould embrace the *Truth*, ſo induced, and ſo perſuaded to it. It is the great Intereſt of Truth, to be received upon ſuch *Motives*, and *Principles*, as are manly and honeſt; ſuch as lay the Foundation deep within, and are directly oppoſite and contradictory to Thoſe by which alone *Falſhood* is, or can be, ſupported.

But when a Man is worked upon, by Torments, or any ſort of *outward* Inconveniences only, to wiſh, or incline, to ſee *a Point* to be *True*; and the *Inclination* carries Him to aſſent, as He thinks, to the ſuppoſed *Arguments* for it; He is not at all ſure that He hath not parted with his *Integrity*, for a *Speculation*; that He hath not made Ship-wreck of his *Conſcience*, for the ſake of a ſuppoſed *Faith*: or, that He is not worthy of that Imputation of holding the *Truth*, in *Unrighteouſneſs*. It is plain-

SERM. X.

ly an *Accidental* thing to *Him*, if He ſhould, by this Method, be brought to a *Right* Opinion in any thing. It is wrought by ſuch Methods, as would as certainly have turned him from *Truth* to *Error*, as from *Error* to *Truth*. He doth not, therefore, reap the Honour of a ſincere and hearty *Lover of Truth*; and perhaps loſes entirely the Reward of all his former Uprightneſs and Integrity. Almighty God gains no *Servant*, no faithful *Dependent*, in *Him*: nor doth the Man ſecure to Himſelf any Share in the Favour and Love of God; as far as We know, either by *Nature*, or the *Goſpel*, the Will of our Heavenly Father.

And, as it is not at all the Intereſt of *Truth*, to be accidentally received, juſt in the ſame manner, as *Error* it ſelf might; ſo, is it the greateſt Indignity and Diſhonour that can poſſibly be offered to that ſame *Truth*, for whoſe Service, as it is pretended, this great Concern is ſhewn. For what hath *Truth* to boaſt againſt it's *Enemy*, and it's Oppoſite, but that the *One* ſtands in need of nothing but *Light* and *Evidence*, to recommend it to Men's Minds; and that the *Other* cannot be ſupported without the Paſſions and *Wrath* of *Man?* This Boaſting is entirely deſtroyed, when the Methods of propagating and ſupporting *Truth* and *Falſhood*, are made the ſame. This puts them upon an equal

equal Foot, and makes their Glory the ſame: For, whatever becomes of *Falſhood*, this Method extinguiſhes all the *Beauty* and *Glory* of *Truth*, by conveying it to the Minds of Men, in a Method unworthy of any thing, but the *groſſeſt Falſhoods*.

This, therefore, is certain to All who know the Value of Integrity and Honeſty in the Eyes of *Almighty God*; that, ſuppoſing the Application of *Outward Evils* could create a real Change of the Perſuaſion within, and that for the better, as to the mere *Truth* of any *Propoſition*; yet, *Error* it ſelf, joined with Uprightneſs and Sincerity of Soul, cannot but be more valuable in the Account of our Great Judge, than *Truth*, either accidentally embraced, or infuſed into the Mind by the Workings of *Force*, and the Conſiderations of *this World*. But it cannot be ſuppoſed, that ſuch a *Perſuaſion* within can really be the Effect of *Outward Evils*. Nor indeed do *They* who make uſe of them, at all trouble themſelves about the *True* Sentiments of Thoſe whom They uſe in a ſuch manner. All that They think of, is to draw the ſame Words, or Sounds, *that is*, the ſame outward *Profeſſions*, from All. This leads us, in the next Place, to obſerve,

SERM. X.

IV. That to *force* the *Profeſſions* of Men contrary to the *Dictates* of their *Conſciences*, in Matters of *Religion*, and *Divine Worſhip*, is directly contributing to the Worſt of Sins; and acting a Part the moſt inexcuſable, and unreaſonable. Any Inſtances of *Torment* or *Miſery*, applied to this Purpoſe, even if it were in Favour of the plaineſt Propoſition in *Mathematics*, would, in the natural Tendency of Things, be ſo far from inclining, either a generous or a perverſe Mind, to the *real Belief* of it, that They would rather create an Averſeneſs to, and Hatred of, a *Point*, which ſtands in need of ſuch Methods of Support. And, ſuppoſing that *Wearineſs* under *Evils*, at Length ſhall make Men *profeſs* ſuch Points to be *true*, which They cannot believe to be ſo: this is, in Thoſe who make uſe of ſuch Methods to this Purpoſe, the Great Crime of enſnaring their Fellow-Creatures into *Hypocriſy*, and in the End, perhaps into *Atheiſm* itſelf; into a Contempt of every Thing truly good, and a Diſregard of what is *True*, and what is *Falſe*. So that I ſhould not doubt to ſay, that All the *Inward Infidelity* and *Atheiſm*, that is in the Hearts of ſo many Men, in thoſe Countries, where *Perſecution* is openly avowed, is in great Meaſure owing to that *Perſecution*,

tion, which pretends to root it out; and will be charged upon the *Perſecutors* themſelves, by the Great Judge of the World, when He ſhall *come, to bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkneſs, and to make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart.* Let us go on now to obſerve, SERM. X.

V. That, as it is juſt, and holds good, in the Caſe of all *Truth*, that it ought to be received, by every Man, in the *Love* of it, and not in the *Fear* of any of this World's Evils: ſo, is it plain, that the more *Important* the Truth is, and the more it relates to another State, and his own *Eternal Salvation*; the more ſtill is it certain, that it ought not to be forced, but to be left to the Man's own Conſcience, and to that *Thought* and *Reflexion*, which were given to Man for the balancing and receiving it; and which alone entitle Him to *Reward*, or *Puniſhment*, for his Conduct relating to it.

The Reaſon is plain; becauſe the Importance of any *Truth* to the Service of God, or the Happineſs of Man, makes it more requiſite, that the *Man* ſhould purſue the *Enquiry* after it, with Sincerity; and hold it faſt with Conſtancy: neither of which He can do, if He is overpowered by the *Motives* of this *World*; and by the ſame Arguments, which equally recommend *Truth* and *Falſhood*; and

SERM. X.

which therefore, would have had the ſame Effect upon his Mind and Tongue, were any *certain Error*, by the like Pain and Diſtreſs, recommended to Him.

Nay, upon this Account it is not unreaſonable to affirm, That it would be more juſtifiable of the two, to erect a *Court* of *Inquiſition*, and to apply the *Extremity* of Bodily *Torments*, for the Conviction of All who will not own that *a Part is greater than the Whole*, or that *Ten are more than Twenty*; than to make uſe of the ſame *Terrors*, in Matters purely *Religious*, that touch the *Worſhip* and *Service* of *God*, according to Men's own Conſciences. The *former* is monſtrous, and abſurd, and an Injury to *Human Society*. The *latter* is as monſtrous and abſurd; and beſides, is a profane *Invaſion* of Almighty God's Province; a Judging his Servants before the Time; an Inſult upon *Conſcience*, which is to be the Rule, and Meaſure, of a Man's Duty here, and of his *Happineſs* hereafter.

Since therefore, to force the *Mind* and *Conſcience* within, is impoſſible; and ſince to force the Words and Profeſſions of Men, againſt their Inward Perſuaſion, is impious and wicked; and ſince this is much more ſo, where *God's* Prerogative, and *Man's* Greateſt Intereſt, are concerned, in the moſt peculiar manner: it remains

remains that the only Method in this Caſe, allowed by Juſtice, or Equity, is, the Uſe of Reaſon and Argument to convince Men inwardly of any Errors; and that All the reſt muſt be left to Charity, and mutual Forbearance. There are *Two* Arguments, to prove This, and to inforce it upon all Men, and *Chriſtians*. The *One* is taken from the Sentiments of all Men, when they make it, or rather feel it, to be their own Caſe: and the *other* is, what ought to be conſtantly regarded by All who bear the Name of *Chriſt*, the Method in which *Chriſtianity* was propagated through the World. SERM. X.

1. As to the *firſt* of theſe; there is no Rule allowed to be more equitable, or more humane and fitting, than this, that what one Man hath reaſon to expect from another, He is obliged in Reaſon to perform to that other, in like Circumſtances. If we cannot think it juſt in Others, in *their* Height of Power, to demand an Agreement in every Thing relating to Religion, of *Us*, ſuppoſing us under their Power; no more can we think it juſt in Us, to exact, with worldly Penalties, that ſame Agreement, whenever Superiority, and Strength, give leave: Becauſe *Force* is not *Right*; nor can any Thing be done lawfully by one Man, which may not as lawfully be done by Another, in the ſame

SERM. X.

ſame Circumſtances. So that Men perpetually pronounce, in this Caſe, their own Sentence of Condemnation, by aſſerting and pronouncing That to be the Height of Injuſtice and Wickedneſs towards themſelves; which yet They will venture too often to practice towards Others, upon every the leaſt Opportunity. It is not only a Law of the Chriſtian Religion, but of eternal Truth, *Whatſoever ye would* (whatſoever You have reaſon to expect) *that Men ſhould do unto you, That do unto them*; and never the *contrary*.

2. But then, as I obſerved, there is ſomething ſo peculiar to *Chriſtians*, in the Propagation of their own Religion, in its firſt and pure State, that it deſerves to be duly conſidered. The great Debate, We ſee, lies, between two Ways of promoting and ſupporting, what is called *Religion*; or extending the Bounds of a *Church*. Theſe are, either *Force*, or *Perſuaſion*: either the Argument of *Reaſon*, or of *outward Evil*. Here then, we ſhall find, which was moſt agreeable to the Wiſdom of God. It was, with reſpect to his Power, equal to Him which Method to make uſe of. Had He ſeen fit to have illuminated and converted the Princes and Magiſtrates of this World, (as He did St. *Paul*) this, according to ſome, would have done the Work effectually. The *Authority* of ſuch

such Men, besides the Influence of their Examples, which there is a natural Inclination in Mankind to imitate, would immediately have drawn into the *Church*, the numerous Throng that is always seen to follow Power and Greatness. Nay, Multitudes of Lives might probably have been saved this way; because no *Persecution* of this *new Religion* could have been set on Foot, when all Power was with it; but would have been applied, on the side of it, if a few (which is not credible,) should have been so unmannerly, or so stubborn, as not to follow Great Examples. But then, the whole End of the *Gospel* had been well nigh frustrated; which was not, a bare Profession of it; but a receiving it as the *Truth*, in the Love of *Truth*, and the not holding it in *Unrighteousness*. Where would then have been the Trial of Men's Hearts and Souls? Where would have been the Proofs of Sincerity and Integrity in it's *Professors*? Where would have been Virtue and Honour, in following what was their great and lasting Profit?

SERM. X.

Almighty God, therefore, who sees the Springs and Ground of all praise-worthy Actions, chose a Method the direct contrary, for the Honour of the *Gospel*, and of the first Professors of it. He not only did *not* cloath it at first, in the Garments of this World's Glory;

SERM. X.

not only did *not* arm it with any of the Force and Might of this State; but He left it to the Power of thoſe Evidences that accompanied it: And, that *Sincerity* might have it's *perfect Work*, He opened it, when all the World was diſpoſed to arm againſt it; not only not to cheriſh or befriend it, but to perſecute and oppreſs it. So that here is the Difference between the *Sentiments* of Man, and of Almighty GOD. Weak *Man* never ſeems to think even the *Religion* of God's *own Inſtitution* ſafe, unleſs it have Perſecution, and worldly Power, in it's Friendſhip and Alliance. And the All-wiſe God judges ſo differently from this, that, in the Settlement and Eſtabliſhment of the Religion of *Chriſt*, he chuſeth to have the Power of this World againſt it, rather than for it. The Reaſon is, that *this* World may have as little to do with Men's Determinations about *Religion*, as poſſible; that the Uprightneſs of the Heart may lay the Foundation; and that Virtue may have it's Effect here, and it's Reward hereafter.

This, methinks, ſhould convince all *Chriſtians*, that *Perſecution*, in any Degree, is the Invention and Inſtrument of God's greateſt Enemy: and that, as *Chriſt* diſdained to make uſe of *outward Force*, in planting the *Beſt Religion* in the World; ſo it is Unchriſtian and Impious

Impious to change his Method, in ſupporting It; and for this Purpoſe, to chuſe Thoſe very *Weapons*, which his *Enemies* uſed at firſt *againſt* Him, and his *Kingdom*: and which, his Father, in his infinite Wiſdom, rejected, as improper for the good *End*, He then had in view. SERM. X.

We may now, at the Concluſion of this Diſcourſe, very juſtly aſk, If all this be true, according to the Law of *Nature*, and the *Goſpel* of *Jeſus Chriſt*; how great, how inexpreſſibly great, is the Guilt of the Leaders of *that Church*, which places the whole Strength of Religion in the Strength of Power, and the Arm of Fleſh; which turns the Motives of all that is good, from *inward* to *outward*; which hath no Care or Concern about *Honeſty* and *Integrity*, but enforceth an *Unity* of *Voices*, by Fires, Baniſhments, Racks, and ſuch like Methods; which forſakes the Paths of Meekneſs plainly pointed out by *God* and *Chriſt*, and purſues thoſe of Deſolation, and Deſtruction? And then, Let us conſider, how much it behoves All who have profeſſed to ſeparate from that Church, to ſeparate effectually from the moſt *Unchriſtian* and *Diabolical* Thing in it; and to keep themſelves at a Diſtance from every Tendency to the ſame *Evil*: to ſtudy the *Goſpel*, and to put on that Spirit of Charity, of

SERM. X.

of Peace, and of Forbearance, which breathes through *Every Page* of it. And This will effectually diſpoſe them, not to judge, or cenſure; much more, not to condemn and injure, oppreſs and torment, the Servants of *Another Maſter*: but to leave their Fellow-Servants, in all Matters of *Religious Concern*, to ſtand or fall, by the Judgment of their one common Lord and Maſter, to whom alone They muſt all give an Account for Themſelves.

Of

Of ZEAL *not according to* KNOWLEDGE.

SERMON XI.

ROM. X. 2.

I bear them record, that they have a Zeal *of* GOD, *but not according to* Knowledge.

SERM. XI.

ZEAL, (in the uſual Acceptation, of the Word, and as it may be underſtood in moſt Places of Scripture,) is a great and Sincere Concern of the Mind for any Thing. And a *Zeal of God*, is a fervent Concern of the Mind, founded upon a *Religious* Principle; a Concern for ſomething which a Man thinks of Importance to the Honour, or Worſhip, of God. But the true Notion of *Religion*, and of the *Honour* of GOD, has been ſo little known in the World; and Superſtitious and fond Opinions about his Will, and his Worſhip, have taken ſuch Root in the Hearts of Mankind,

SERM. XI.

kind, and been propagated ſo from Age to Age; that the *Zeal* commonly obſerved in the World, has been of more Prejudice to *true Religion*, and the *Honour* of *God*, than the greateſt Indifference and Coldneſs could have been. So ready human Nature has always been to miſtake, in ſuch weighty Matters; and to turn the *Virtues* and *Duties* of *Religion* into *Vices*, by their Miſunderſtandings, and the undue Management of their Paſſions.

A *Zeal* of GOD is, in itſelf, a reaſonable and commendable Thing. But when Men miſtake in the firſt Principles, and great Fundamentals of *Religion*; and fix upon the Deity whom they worſhip Such Attributes and Qualities as are agreeable to their own Fancies or Inclinations; all that they act is out of the right Way: and their *Zeal* degenerates into a ſuperſtitious Fury, and a mere Madneſs; being not guided by Reaſon, nor built upon a true Underſtanding of the Nature of *Religion*. Thus St. *Paul* obſerves, in the Text, that the *Jews*, even whilſt they rejected and perſecuted *Chriſtianity*, and adhered to Juſtification by their own *Law*, had a Religious *Zeal:* but He obſerves, alſo, that it was *not according to Knowledge*; not accompanied with Underſtanding, or built upon a right Apprehenſion of Matters.

And

SERM. XI.

And that We, whilſt we have a *Zeal* of *God*, and a Concern for what we account *Religion*, may not fall into the ſame Condemnation; it will be proper for Us to ſpend ſome Thoughts upon this Subject. And, in order to do this with Advantage, I propoſe theſe following Things:

I. To ſhew When it is that a Religious *Zeal* is *not according to Knowledge*.

II. To lay down the beſt Rule I can, for regulating *our Religious Zeal*.

III. To offer ſome *Motives*, in order to our avoiding that *Religious Zeal*, which is *not according to Knowledge*.

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew When it is that a Religious *Zeal* is *not according to Knowledge*. And, I think, this may be determined, 1. By the *Degree* of our *Zeal*, which ought always to be proportioned to the Value of the Object of it. 2. By the *Methods* in which it ſhews itſelf. And 3. By the *Motives* which give Life to it.

1. A *Religious Zeal* is *not according to Knowledge*, when the *Object* of it is not what it ought to be. Nay, It is Abſurd and Fooliſh; a Contradiction to All Reaſon and Underſtanding; when is employed upon what does

SERM. XI.

not deſerve any Part of our Regard. As We are made Reaſonable Creatures, We are obliged to act as Such. And therefore, When Men regulate and ſettle their *Religious Zeal*, for their own private Conduct, which is a Matter of great Moment to them; it ought to be done with the moſt mature Deliberation, and upon the beſt Grounds; with Regard to nothing, but what is of real Weight in the Balance of Reaſon, and of the *Goſpel*. Otherwiſe, They may unhappily come to lay out the Strength and Vigour of their Souls upon what cannot profit them; upon what cannot carry forward the great Affair of their Salvation in another World; and to found their warmeſt Expectations of God's Favour, and Happineſs, upon inſignificant Trifles. And then, All their Concern for them, the more Vigorous and Paſſionate it is, the more Abſurd it will be alſo. It may be a *Religious Zeal*, indeed: but it will be, *not according to Knowledge*, or Underſtanding.

And as the *Degree* of our *Zeal* ought to be proportioned by the Value of it's ſeveral *Objects*; it is evident That Our *Religious Zeal* is not *according to Knowledge*, when We ſhew *more Zeal* for ſome Matters of Little Conſideration, than we do for Thoſe of much more Moment, and of greater Importance to us. All Men who believe any

Thing of Religion, (and none but ſuch can pretend to any Thing of a *Religious Zeal,)* cannot but acknowledge that the main Deſign of it, and the ſtrong *Lines* of *moral Duty*, to which it always tends, are the Matters of greateſt Concernment to them. This, I am ſure, our *Saviour* has plainly taught all *Chriſtians:* and yet, the *Zeal* of Men, and even of *Chriſtians*, which has moſt appeared in the World, has been ſeen to exert itſelf, as if *Theſe* were framed to yield to Points of much leſs Conſideration. The Honour of God, in the Sanctification of Men's Lives, has been too much neglected; the Terms of *Salvation*, propoſed by God himſelf, both in his Book of *Reaſon*, and That of *Revelation*, have been overlooked. Other Terms have been invented; other Supports for Men's Hopes and Expectations ſought out: and a much greater Streſs laid upon ſome Circumſtances, which are, comparatively, trifling and inſignificant, than upon what God has *plainly* declared to be of the greateſt Importance. SERM. XI.

But, certainly, We act not agreeably to that Character of underſtanding Creatures, which we pretend to, when we put off the great and momentous Points of *Religion*, with a very ſmall Part of our *Zeal*; and employ the main Force of it upon ſomething of much leſs Con-

SERM. XI.

sideration: when we expreſs a very cold Affection, and little Warmth, for Righteouſneſs, and Juſtice, and Temperance, Truth, and Honeſty, and Integrity; but have a burning *Zeal* for ſome particular outward Forms, or inward Opinions; or for the Enlargement of the worldly Intereſt of a particular *Sect*; none of which can come in Competition with Thoſe greater Matters, which True Religion ſtrictly and principally requires.

2. Our religious *Zeal* is, certainly, then *not according to Knowledge*, when it ſhews itſelf by undue *Methods*, and is diſcovered after an indecent and unchriſtian Manner. Let the *Objects* of our religious Concern be what They will, and what they ought to be; let the *Degree* of this inward Concern be, according to the Rules of Equity, proportionable to the *Objects*; yet there is ſomething more requiſite: It muſt not break forth into *Indecencies*, or *do Evil that Good may come*. We cannot be too much concerned for the Honour of God, and the Converſion of the World from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan to the living God. But the aiming at the Service of God himſelf, will not juſtify all the Means we may poſſibly uſe, in our great Concern for it. *Zeal* for God, and his Glory, muſt not break in upon any of the Laws which He himſelf has

has laid down, in order to his own Glory: for this would be to affront Him, in order to honour him; and to bring a Disgrace upon his Religion, in order to propagate and extend it. And therefore, When the *Zeal* of any Persons for what they account Religion, breaks forth into Reproaches and Calumnies, Murthers and Destructions, Violences and Passions, Invasions of Rights and Privileges, and the like; or, when *Zeal* for Religion discovers itself in any Thing contrary to the known Laws of that same Religion; so that Virtue itself suffers, in any of its Branches: it is apparent that This is a *Zeal of God, not according to* Knowledge; being founded upon the Ignorance of what God expressly requires; and proceeding from Men's not knowing, or not regarding, the eternal Laws of Practice, which God himself has proposed to Mankind. And of such Persons as These, the Apostle, in another Place of this Epistle, says, *whose Damnation is just.*

3. *Lastly*, When the *Motives* that give Life and Vigour to our *Religious Zeal* are worldly and Evil; then our Zeal is *not according to Knowledge*, nor begun, and carried on, by Reason and Understanding. This *one* Thing will spoil the Best of all our Actions, and will certainly ruine the Beauty and Acceptableness of our *Zeal* in the Eyes of God. To express a Warm

SERM. XI.

Zeal for *Him*, and for his Honour, and His Commands, above all other Things; and to ſhew this Zeal in proper and becoming *Methods*; *Theſe* are very laudable and Chriſtian Points. But to exert this *Zeal* upon Temporal Conſiderations, and for ſome vile End of our own, undiſcovered to the World, renders the whole Procedure odious to God; even when there is Nothing bad in it, but the *Principles*, upon which Men act. For God ſees the Heart and the Reins; and is intimately acquainted with every Thought in Man. He delights in *Sincerity*. And though *That* will cover many an Imperfection in his Eyes, yet, Nothing can atone before Him, for the Want of *That*. And it is the Highth of *Ignorance*, for any underſtanding Creature not to know this: and, if it be known, it is the Highth of *Aſſurance*, to think to impoſe upon Almighty God with the outward Appearance, or Maſk, of *Zeal* for his Name.

That *religious Zeal*, which alone He can look upon with Delight, muſt be founded upon an inward Senſe of the Importance of *Religion*. But if there be all the Outſide and Pomp of *Zeal* imaginable; and this be founded upon mere *worldly* Conſiderations, and be expreſſed only to carry forward ſome *temporal* End; it is abſurd to think, that God can approve of it;

or

or that this is such a *Religious Zeal*, as it becomes an understanding Creature to have. Actions materially good and praise-worthy, are rendered vicious and evil by the *Motives* that give the first Spring to them. From whence it follows, that, though a *Zeal for God* and Religion, be, in itself, worthy of Commendation and Reward; yet, when it is built upon Considerations taken from this World only, and not upon a due Sense of Religion heartily embraced within, it becomes a *vicious Zeal*, a *Zeal* unacceptable to God; as it is not only *not according to Knowledge*, but absolutely inconsistent with it. Thus have I endeavoured to shew, *when* it is, that a *Religious Zeal* may be said to be *not according to Knowledge*: which was the *First* Thing I proposed.

But, before I proceed any farther, I desire to put in a *Caution*, That I would not be understood, by any Thing I have said, under this first Head, to intimate That a great *Regard* was not due to Those *Performances* appointed by our Lord, in his *Religion*, which, compared with Some *Others*, may justly be esteemed of *less Importance*. For I know Who has said, *These Ye ought to do, and not to leave the Others undone*. But what I have offered on this Subject, I intended to this Purpose, that We should not fix our *Zeal* upon these *lesser* Matters, more than upon Those which God him-

SERM. XI.

self has with a greater Concern recommended to us: and that We should, much less, discover a greater *Zeal* about the Differences in Opinion and Worship, amongst *Christians*, not plainly determined in the *Gospel*, than for the more important Duties expressly commanded in it: for this is, certainly, a *Zeal not according to Knowledge*.

When the Duty of *Sacrifice*, under the *Law*, came in Competition with the Duty of *Charity* and *Mercy*, our *Lord* himself observed, out of one of the *Prophets*, that GOD *required Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. And so, when any Moral Duty comes in Competition with an instituted Rite, we know, by this Rule, (confirmed by our blessed *Lord*,) which is to give Place. This Preference shews that the One is, of itself, of greater Value; and therefore, Reason will direct us to have *more Zeal* for it.

So likewise, it is certainly lawful for Us to be concerned for any Practice, Opinion, or Notion, relating to Religion, which we ourselves think True, and of Importance; and to shew this Concern by all Christian Methods; nay, to endeavour to convince Others of the Reasonableness of complying with it. But it is a wretched Absurdity to make the Obligation to this Compliance, of equal Importance to Mankind, with their Obligation to Righteousness and Holiness; and much more So, to shew a greater Heat and Concern,

Concern, in order to make Men all of one Mind, and one Opinion, than in order to make Them holy, and juſt, and charitable. Having juſt mentioned this *Caution*, I now proceed to the *next* Thing I propoſed; which was, SERM. XI.

II. To lay down the beſt *Rule* I can, for regulating our *Religious Zeal.*

This is certain, that it is our Duty to have a *Zeal* for GOD, and for *Religion.* But it is our Duty alſo, as certainly, to take effectual Care that it be a *Zeal according to Knowledge*; leſt otherwiſe it ſhould flame out, to the Prejudice and Diſhonour of Religion itſelf, and of that God in whoſe Service it pretends to burn. The Beſt and only Rule, I can think of, is, that we muſt take all poſſible Care to fix in our Minds juſt and true Notions of the Nature of GOD, and of the great Deſign of *Chriſtianity.* For, as the fundamental Error of Men, in this important Matter, has been the forming to Themſelves the falſeſt Notions of the *Nature* of Almighty GOD, and of the *End* of the *Goſpel* itſelf; and, as this Error has given the ſad Occaſion to all their Madneſs, under the Covert of a godly Zeal: So, the *Rule* I have mentioned muſt be the moſt proper to prevent, or cure, this great *Evil.*

When Men have been ſo fooliſh, as to imagine that God is pleaſed, and ſerved, and worſhiped,

SERM. XI.

shiped, as He ought to be, by little and trifling Ceremonies; nay, by absurd Rites, and ridiculous Offices of Devotion; (as many have brought themselves to think,) They naturally lay out all their Strength, and employ all the Bent of their Minds, to establish and propagate these; and stick not, at last, to destroy All that stand in the Way of their Fancies. Indeed, the chief Agents of this Sort, in the World, are, I believe, too wise to be persuaded themselves of the Truth of what they pretend to Others. But many, who serve under them, in the Prosecution of their Ends, think that all they are doing, let it be never so bad, is necessary for the Honour and Service of Almighty God, and his true Religion; and therefore, lawful. But if we would not Ourselves be of the Number of Those whose Zeal is a Dishonour to God; we must take Care to know what that God is, whom we serve; what his Nature and Attributes are; what his Will and Pleasure is; and what the End of his making Mankind capable of regarding it, and living according to it.

Nothing can be of more Service to us, in the Matter now before Us, than This, which I am now recommending to you. Supposing, what is certain, that We shall find, upon Inquiry, that God, the great Lord whose Servants we are, is a God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; that

SERM. XI.

that He is merciful, juſt, and holy, to an infinite Degree; that he cannot hate any of his Creatures; that he wiſhes, and deſigns their Happineſs; that he made them to know, and worſhip, and ſerve Him, in the Practice of all Virtue; that he reveled his Will to them, by his Son, in order to teach them more effectually to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World; and by This to bring them to all Happineſs in another, and better State: Suppoſing, I ſay, a ſerious Perſon made truly ſenſible of this; Is it poſſible for him to think of honouring God any otherwiſe, than by the Practice of what he knows to be pleaſing to him? Or, to purſue any thing in the whole World, with a *Zeal* comparable to That, with which he preſſes after what He knows to be the *Will* of that God? Can ſuch a Man ever ſuffer himſelf to tranſgreſs the plain Laws of God, in order to promote his Honour? to be cruel and barbarous, in order to carry forward the Glory of his *merciful Father?* to be unjuſt and uncharitable, to ſhew his Zeal for the God of all Right, and the Father of all Mercies? Or, to be ill-natured to all the World about him, in order to propagate the moſt peaceable and beſt-natured Inſtitution in the World?

I hope, as far as the Nature of the Thing itſelf can go, I may be juſtified in anſwering, That

SERM. XI.

That ſuch a Conduct is next to impoſſible. *He*, who ſincerely inquires into the Attributes of Almighty God, cannot eaſily ſuffer himſelf to act any thing contrary to that Nature and thoſe Attributes. *He*, who ſeriouſly looks into the Chriſtian Religion, will not eaſily think that any Thing, which contradicts the very Deſign of that Religion, can be acceptable to Him who inſtituted it. *He*, who ſees how great a Streſs is laid in the *Goſpel*, upon Holineſs, and Mercy, and Peace, can never be induced, under Pretenſe of the Honour of *Chriſt*, or his Church, to diſregard the Practice of *theſe*, even for one Day. Nor can *He*, Who ever once thought in earneſt about Religion, be brought to imagine it to be a praiſeworthy Practice to ſerve the Cauſe of it by vicious and immoral Actions.

There is nothing therefore, more likely to fix our *Zeal* upon its true Object; and to fix it in the greateſt *Degree* upon what moſt deſerves it; to keep it from diſcovering itſelf in all *Methods* diſapproved and condemned by Religion; and to rectify the Principles and *Motives* which give Life to it; than the Study of the Nature of God, and the Deſign of *Chriſtianity*. I hope, upon the whole, I may conclude, That, if Men would ſtudy the *Book of Reaſon*, and the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, ſeriouſly, They could not poſſibly entertain, or ſhew forth, any *Religious Zeal*, but what

what is *according to Knowledge*. I ſhall now proceed, SERM. XI.

III. To offer ſome *Motives*, in order to our avoiding ſuch a *Religious Zeal*, as is *not according to Knowledge*. And to excite us to the well-regulatingour *Religious Zeal*, it will be very proper to conſider,

1. The Reaſonableneſs, and excellent Uſefulneſs, of *Religious Zeal*, when it is duely regulated. It is not left to our Choice, whether we will have a *Zeal* for *God*, and *Religion*, or not; but it is our Duty to form and nouriſh it in ourſelves: and ſuch a Duty as we cannot but practice, and effectually compaſs, if we heartily ſet about it. To have a Zeal for God, is to have a warm and affectionate concern for a Being to whom we have innumerable Obligations; who is the proper Object of all our Hopes, and Deſires, and Expectations; and who has all poſſible Claims to our whole Service. And to have a Zeal for the Subſtantials of *Religion*, is to have a great Regard for what deſerves it more than all other Things in the World; for what is truly pleaſing to our Lord and Maſter, and can never be otherwiſe; for what is eſſentially neceſſary to the Happineſs of human Society here below, and to our own eternal Reward hereafter.

It

SERM. XI.

It is juſt and becoming, therefore, to have a *Zeal*, and hearty Concern, for this great and important Buſineſs of *Religion*. And, to have this *Zeal* ſo directed, as to purſue its End by none but proper and Religious *Methods*; by Nothing but what Reaſon and God himſelf recommend; is, to conſult the true Honour of Religion, and the Service of that God who requires it of Us. No Scandal is brought, by ſuch a Conduct, upon our Profeſſion: but every Mouth bleſſes it. And then, to have this *Zeal* founded on the *Motives* of eternal Moment, the Rewards of Heaven, and the Importance of Religion, and the Favour of God and *Chriſt*, is to improve the Beauty and Lovelineſs of it yet more. There can be no Argument in the World, nor the leaſt Shadow of an Objection made, againſt a *Zeal*, which has God, and the Practice of Religion, for its Objects; which regards *Theſe* more than any Thing of leſſer Conſideration; which diſcovers itſelf only in the Ways and Methods recommended in the Goſpel; and which works upon no other Principles but what the Goſpel approves of. But, on the contrary,

2. Let us conſider the Unreaſonableneſs, and the pernicious Conſequences, of a *Religious Zeal*, not well-regulated; or, in the *Apoſtle's* Words, *not according to Knowledge*.

And

And here it is too obvious to Every Man's Obſervation, that Nothing has done more Miſchief, or produced more lamentable Effects in the World, than this Sort of *Zeal*. It was this *Zeal* for the ceremonial Part of their Law, that kept the *Jews* from acknowledging our *Saviour*; nay, which induced Them to reject and crucify him. It was this *Zeal* for Matters of leſſer Conſideration, which, in very early Days, diſunited the *Churches* of *Chriſt* from One Another; and in theſe *later* Ages, keeps up, with a fatal Heat, the Differences between the ſeveral Sorts of Diſciples of *Chriſt*, in the World; and leads *Chriſtians*, by degrees, to act againſt their Fellow-Chriſtians, with a Spirit of *Fury*, and wicked Perſecution. It is this *Zeal* without *Knowledge*, and the Diſcovery of it in an undue and unchriſtian Manner, which has prejudiced many againſt the very Name of *Chriſt*; and made the glad Tidings of Salvation a *Scandal* to Unbelievers.

But though it appears (as we have ſeen it to be, in the firſt Part of this Diſcourſe,) ſo unreaſonable, in itſelf; and has proved ſo pernicious to the Cauſe of true Religion in the World; Yet, it has always had a Multitude of *Votaries*, who have loved and entertained it *Themſelves*; and who have abuſed and perſecuted *Others*, who have not ſhewn their Zeal in the

SERM. XI.

the ſame ſevere, and inhuman *Methods*. Nothing could be of worſe Conſequence to the *Jews*, than this *blind Zeal* for their *Ceremonial Law*: and yet Nothing was in more Repute amongſt them. And They who had it not; They, who believed that *Sacrifice* was of *leſs* Value than *Mercy*, or moral Duties of greater Moment than Ceremonies; or the Salvation of the whole World of greater Concern than their Rites and Forms of Religion; were accounted falſe and perfidious; treated with Contempt, expoſed and affronted, excommunicated, and baniſhed from Society. And They have been followed, in this Path of Uncharitableneſs, ever ſince, in all Ages and Countries, by Such as have followed them in their *Zeal not according to Knowledge*.

But, One of the *Worſt* Conſequences of this, I muſt not omit; becauſe it is to be found wherever this blind *Zeal* is, even in the loweſt Degree; That it naturally brings in, wherever it is univerſally embraced, an univerſal Neglect of the great and ſubſtantial Parts of *Practical Religion*. For when Men's Thoughts and Hearts are taken up with the Shadows of Things, and all their Heat and Vigour ſpent upon theſe; They have no Time, or Zeal, left for the greater Matters of the *Goſpel*. Nay, it is often ſeen, that, when They are moſt poſſeſſed with a *Zeal* for

for the leſſer Matters and Appendages of Religion, They are moſt of all apt to forget the ſacred Laws of Practice, and to tranſgreſs the Rules laid down in that very Religion which, they think They are propagating.

There cannot be any *Conſideration* of more Weight with *Chriſtians*, in the preſent Caſe, than This, That *where* the greateſt Heat and Concern are expreſſed about the inſignificant Circumſtances of Religion, *there* the *eſſential* Parts of it are ſeen moſt to be neglected, in the Lives, and whole Behaviour, of the Profeſſors of it. What *Chriſtian* will not be moved to diſcourage, and put what Check He can, to a Fire, which may, too probably, burn to the Deſtruction of all that is valuable in that Religion itſelf, in whoſe Cauſe alone it pretends to burn?

It is, I confeſs, a melancholy Conſideration, that ſome of the beſt *Qualities* and *Affections* of the Mind, ſo eaſily degenerate into accurſed and wicked Paſſions; and tend, in their Corruption, to the Ruine of the beſt and moſt important Things in the World. But this ſhould excite our moſt ſerious Conſideration; and induce us to make the great Strokes of *Practical Religion* the chief *Objects* of our *Zeal*; and to reſolve to ſhew this Zeal by Thoſe Methods only,

SERM. XI.

which the Gospel recommends to Us, as much as it doth this *Zeal* itself. And then, We may be secure from falling under the Censure of the Apostle, in the Text, of *having a* Zeal *not according to* Knowledge; and not only of This, but of pleasing *Almighty God*, by placing our *Zeal* where it ought to be placed; by regulating it agreeably to his Nature and Perfections: And so, at last, may inherit the Reward of that *Faith* and *Obedience*, which we have not defiled by a false, rash, and wicked, *Zeal*; or by pretending to carry forward the Honour of God, by such *Methods* as He himself abhors.

The

The Impossibility of serving GOD *and* MAMMON.

SERMON XII.

LUKE xvi. 13.

No Servant can serve two Masters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or else He will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve GOD *and* MAMMON.

IN these Words our *Blessed Lord* supposes, and represents, all Men who have it in their Power to come to the Knowledge of the Supreme GOD, as tied and bound to Him, in the Relation of *Servants*. This being the Supposition; in order to convince his Followers of the great Unreasonableness of pretending to be the *Servants* of God, and yet to be the *Servants*, together with *Him*, of an opposite

SERM. XII.

SERM. XII.

Maſter; Slaves to the *Riches*, or Grandeur, of *this* World; Our Lord uſeth an Illuſtration taken from common Life. *No Servant* amongſt Men *can* poſſibly *ſerve two Maſters*, that is, *two Maſters*, with different and oppoſite Wills; of contrary Tempers, and contrary Reſolutions. For it will be either thus, that the Servant will have a much greater inward Affection, and Kindneſs, for *one* of them than for the *other*: Or, ſuppoſing that He can inwardly *love* them both equally; yet the Nature of their Commands, and ſeparate Intereſts, is ſuch, that He muſt often, whilſt He is obeying the one, or *holding to the one*, as the Text expreſſeth it, *deſpiſe*, that is, *neglect* the Commands of the *Other*. The *firſt* Affirmation is, that He cannot be ſuppoſed to *love* them both equally, ſo as to be attached to their Intereſts equally in his inward Affection, and Inclination: the *ſecond* Affirmation is, that, ſuppoſing him to *love* them both equally, yet, in the Execution of their contrary Commands, He muſt unavoidably *neglect*, or *deſpiſe*, the one, whilſt He *holds to*, or obeys, the other. From this Inſtance of a *Servant* amongſt Men, pretending invain to ſerve *two Maſters*, oppoſite in their Intereſts, and their Wills, Our Lord argues, and aſſures his Followers, That it is ſo, with reſpect to *God*, and *Riches*, here repreſented as a *Perſon*,

SERM. XII.

a *Perſon*, or *falſe God*, ſet up as a *Maſter*, in Oppoſition to the *true* GOD. Ye cannot ſerve the true GOD, and *Mammon*; that is, *Riches*, or the imaginary *God* of *Wealth*.

If you would now ſee the Force of our Lord's *Argument*, extended, as it ought to be, to other Points, as well as Riches; it may be comprehended in theſe three Propoſitions. "You are all obliged by the ſtrongeſt Ties, and the moſt unanſwerable Reaſons, to be faithful and ſincere *Servants* of the true GOD, to whom You owe Yourſelves, and all you have, and all You can hope for." Now, as it is impoſſible, amongſt Men, for a *Servant* to ſerve *two* oppoſite Maſters, either affectionately, or faithfully; ſo, it is impoſſible for *You* to be the *Servants* of the fictitious *God* of this World, and to ſerve the *true God* faithfully, at the ſame Time. "Therefore, you are obliged, if you would ſerve God, as you ought, to renounce to the Service of every *other Maſter*, oppoſite to him, in Intereſt, and in Will." From the Text, thus explained, I ſhall take occaſion to diſcourſe of ſeveral Particulars, not foreign to the plain Deſign of the Words; nor uſeleſs to *Chriſtians* of theſe *later* Ages.

I. I ſhall obſerve that many Perſons, who have naturally good Diſpoſitions, and, frequently holy and warm Reſolutions, pleaſe themſelves

SERM. XII. with dividing their Services between God, and Something oppoſite to Him; and entertain a fooliſh Opinion that this Conduct is a ſecure way to his Favour.

II. I ſhall obſerve to you how unreaſonable, and how uſeleſs, this Diviſion of their Service is; and how ill-grounded and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon ſuch a Service.

III. I ſhall endeavour to diſſuade you from all ſuch Service to Any thing in this World, as will make it impoſſible for you to perform the Service that is indiſpenſably due to God. And,

IV. I ſhall conclude with a proper Application, concerning the Reaſonableneſs, the Honour, the Advantage, and true Glory, of that Service which we owe to Almighty God.

I. I ſhall obſerve, that many Perſons, who have good Diſpoſitions, and frequently holy and warm Reſolutions, often pleaſe Themſelves with *dividing* their Services between *God*, and ſomething oppoſite to Him; and entertain a fooliſh Opinion that, by thus halving their Behaviour, They are in a ſecure Way, and *truly* his Servants. For it being ſo, that *Religion* hath been taught them, and the plain Doctrines

trines of it inculcated upon them from their Childhood; and That, notwithſtanding all the Allurements, or Terrors, of the World, *Virtue* hath ſtill its peculiar Attractions, and Advantages; and that the Proſpect, or even Suſpicion, of God's Anger and future Puniſhment, is very terrible, and to ſome Minds intolerable: Theſe Things, I ſay, being ſo; many Perſons find it impoſſible to root out of their Minds all Regard to *Religion*. They experience a Reluctance in their Conſciences, when they attempt it; and this Reluctance gives them ſo much Uneaſineſs, as rather determines them to ſet about ſome *Part* of the Work of *Religion*, than to neglect the *Whole*. They cannot bear the Thoughts of being totally caſt off by Almighty God; and of forfeiting all poſſible Title to Heaven and Happineſs; and of incurring certainly his Wrath and Diſpleaſure. Theſe Things they cannot think of with any Eaſe; nor can they bring their Conſciences to ſit down quiet under the Apprehenſion of them. SERM. XII.

But then, on the other hand, perhaps their natural Inclination leads them ſtrongly to ſome particular Vice, or other: Perhaps Cuſtom has improved this Inclination, before they were enough aware of it: Perhaps, it brings them in a great deal of preſent *Profit*, and *Advantage*;

SERM. XII.

or it procures them a great deal of *Pleasure*; or Honour, and Pomp, may attend upon it. These Things are so entertaining, and bewitching, to some particular Minds, and Tempers, that Men are not able to bear the Thought of parting, effectually and entirely, with what procures them so much present Satisfaction. When their Minds are employed upon the Excellency and Beauty of Religion, and the good Consequences of serving God truly; and are a little at Leisure from the close Attacks of any thing of this World; then perhaps, they may come to a Resolution of forsaking all for God, and a good Conscience; and be vain enough to think that Nothing shall move them from such Resolutions. But when the Season of *Trial* comes again; and the Temptation presents itself to Them, in all its Force: They begin to think more favourably of the Matter; and to imagine it no mortal Crime, to be influenced by it; and to give Proofs, by their Weakness, that they are Men.

This being their Case, between the Motions of Conscience, and God's Commands, on one hand, and the Temptations of Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, on the other; They at last are seen to come, with Calmness and a Sort of Serenity of Mind, to divide themselves between *this* World and the *other*: between the *true* God, and the

Idol God of this State; and to procure themſelves a Sort of Eaſe, by performing Part of that *Service* which they owe to Almighty God, (and This, to be ſure, will be the Part that They themſelves happen to like beſt) whilſt at the ſame Time they never loſe the View of what they propoſe to themſelves in this vain World. All indeed do not give up themſelves to the ſame Maſters. Some you may ſee purſuing Pleaſure to an immoderate Degree; others, ambitious beyond all Bounds; others, buſying themſelves in amaſſing Heaps of uſeleſs Wealth: and very many of theſe, in their Intervals, appearing before God, in publick Worſhip; calling themſelves his Servants, and perhaps really thinking that they are ſo. But SERM. XII.

II. I come now to obſerve to you how unreaſonable, and how uſeleſs, this *Diviſion* of their *Service* is: and how ill-grounded, and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon ſuch a Service.

And this will appear moſt evidently by conſidering, what the true *Service* of God is; and how much of our Hearts and Time it muſt unavoidably require. The great Miſtake of Men ſeems to lye in their not knowing, or not attending to, the true Notion of God's Service. Were it ſo indeed, that to ſerve GOD were

SERM. XII.

were nothing but to ſay our Prayers, to call him Maſter, to attend upon his Ordinances, to bow before him, to lift up our Hands and Eyes, to confeſs our Sins, to beg his Bleſſing, and to give him Thanks: were *This*, or the like, all that is implied in ſerving God, then it is very certain that we might divide Ourſelves, and give the World our Strength, and our Heart, and our Practice, whilſt we ſerve God (as ſome call it) with our Lips, and our Bodies. We might then certainly go, from our Intemperance and our Luxury, to our Prayers and Praiſes; we might come freſh from cheating our Neighbours, and fall low before the Footſtool of our Maſter; we might come from our Hoards of ill-gotten Poſſeſſions, and be as loud, as the beſt of our Neighbours, in calling God our Father, in profeſſing our Faith in him, and laying Ourſelves before the Throne of his Mercy.

But this Notion muſt be rooted out of Men's Minds. This is what God complained of, under the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation. *This People draweth nigh to Me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from Me.* You ſee, the *Worſt* amongſt that wicked and corrupted Generation of Men, in which our *Saviour* appeared, put on the greateſt Shew of *Zeal* for God and his *Service*. Who ſuch Zealots as *They*, to *pay Tithes*;

Tithes; to *faſt*; to *pray*; and to do *many* other Things which belonged to their *Religion?* But what was this? or to what Purpoſe? Their Practice, their Hearts (which are diſcovered by Practice) were all another Way. *Mammon* was their true Maſter; becauſe *They* were his true *Servants*. The *Service* they did to *Sin* was viſible. The World about them felt the Effects of it: whilſt they called that Form of *Religion*, the Service of God, which He aſſured them He abhorred and deteſted, when it was ſeparated from that practical Service which He indiſpenſably required. SERM. XII.

For what is it, in which the *Service* of any Maſter upon Earth conſiſts? Is it in the calling *Him*, our *Maſter*; or *Ourſelves*, his *Servants?* Is it in a formal Attendance upon him, to receive his Commands, or merely to know his Pleaſure? Is it a bare confeſſing of Ourſelves guilty of tranſgreſſing his Will, and in a daily returning to aſk his Pardon? Will any *Maſter* upon Earth acknowledge this to be *Service?* or, will any *Maſter* value, or regard a Man who behaves himſelf thus, as his *Servant?* Offer it now to any Man, and ſee if He will accept of ſuch *Mock-Service*, as this. If *I be a Maſter*, ſaith God, by his Prophet, *where is my Service?* i. e. If I be *your Maſter*, as you pretend to call me, pay me the *Service* due to a *Maſter:*

SERM. XII.

ter: Behave yourselves as that Relation, which you pretend to be between us, enjoins and demands.

It is the Part of a Servant to regard the Interest of his Master, as his own Interest; to consult the Honour of his Master, as his own Honour; and principally, which is the only Thing to judge by, to look upon his Master's Will, as far as a Master's Authority reacheth, as the Guide and Rule of his Actions. Now, if We apply this to Almighty God, and that Relation we stand in to Him, as *Servants*; we shall presently see how far the Service we owe him reacheth; how much of our Time, and how much of our Hearts, it must of necessity take up. The *Interest* of our great *Master* must be esteemed by Us, as our own Interest. Now, the Interest of our *Master* can be Nothing, but the Encrease of all that He approves of; and the Addition of as many Persons as possible, to his true Service. Our great *Master's Honour* is what we are obliged, as Servants, to consult and regard. And this lies likewise, in the Likeness of all understanding Natures to his moral Perfections; and in the advancing, as much as possible, the State of true Virtue in the World. And, what comprehends all, our great *Master's Will* must be made the Rule of all our Actions: for They are but indifferent

indifferent Servants indeed, who do not pay a conſtant and ſtrict regard to the *Will* of their *Maſters*. Now, the *Will* of God is every Command that he hath made known to Us, whether by the Law of Nature, which is his Voice; or by the Law of Revelation, which is an open Confirmation of that firſt *Law*.

From hence, therefore, it appears that, under the *Service* of God, is comprehended the whole *Syſtem* of *moral* Virtues, as well as all the external Acts of Devotion and Worſhip. A *Part* of that *Service*, which we owe to him, is indeed, external Adoration; the Prayers, and Praiſes, of our Lips; and all the Expreſſions of Dependence upon *Him*, and univerſal *Love* to *Others*, which become ſuch Creatures as we are. But *this* is but one *Part* of his *Service*; however it may have come to be called, in general, by that Name. Nay, if it do not proceed from the Heart and Soul; if the Mind and Thoughts do not ſincerely accompany it, and direct it all, with due Affections and Sentiments, to Him; it is indeed no Part of his Service; but only ſo many Words pronounced, without Meaning; and ſo many Sounds, muttered over for *Form's* Sake, without any Effect either upon Him, or Ourſelves. Nay, and ſuppoſing the Heart and Soul to go along with Us in theſe *outward* Exerciſes of our *Religion*; ſuppoſing Us

SERM. XII.

Us to be sincere in *this* Part of God's *Service*; and to confess, and pray, and praise, and intercede, with all the present Affection that becomes the Attendance of such *Servants* upon such a *Master*: yet, when this is done, This is but a *Part* of his *Service*.

There remains behind a large Field of *Virtue*. *Temperance*, and a Command of Ourselves, and all our Appetites; *Charity*, or an unbounded Love to all the intelligent Creation; *Justice*, or a strict Regard to the Dues and Rights of all Mankind about us; *Forgiveness* of the greatest, and most provoking Injuries, that can be offered us; *Patience*, under all the *Evils* of Pain, Sickness, Loss, Disappointment, that come upon us by the Providence of our Master; and *Contentment* in every Station, to which he is pleased to confine Us; in a word, such a Behaviour and Conduct, in that Post in which our great *Master* placeth us, as becomes us, as *Servants*, and as is required by the Nature of it, whatever it be. All may be comprehended in the two great Commandments, of *loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and all our Mind, and all our Soul, and all our Strength:* and of *loving our Neighbours as Ourselves:* or may be summed up in St. *Paul's* comprehensive Expression of *living soberly* with Respect to ourselves; *righteously*, with Respect to

to our Neighbour; and *godlily*, with Reſpect to Almighty God, in this World. SERM. XII.

This being then the Taſk of God's *Servants*; this being the Work which every one hath to do, that hath given up his Name to Him; tell me now, Is there any room for *other Maſters*, oppoſite or contrary to Him? Can any Man *love God with all his Heart*, and yet love any Enemy to God with the leaſt Degree of his Affection; or the leaſt Part of his Heart? Can any Man, who hath ſuch a Taſk marked out for him; ſo many Virtues to excel in; ſo many good Habits to implant in himſelf; ſo many good Actions to fill up every Moment of his Time; ſo ſtrict a Regard to pay to the Honour of his great Maſter, and the Commands of ſuch a Lord: Can any Man, I ſay, in theſe Circumſtances, find any Opportunity, or the leaſt Interval of Time, for the Service of other *contrary* Maſters; ſuch, I mean, as direct Him to any Inſtances of that *Sin*, which is as oppoſite to the Will of GOD, as *Darkneſs* is to *Light?* It is evident indeed, from the Nature of the Thing itſelf, that, in whatſoever Point we decline from his Service, we ceaſe to *ſerve* him; and that, as ſoon as we are drawn to *Sin*, we are no longer the *Servants of God*, but of his *Enemy*. For *know ye not*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *that to whom Ye yield yourſelves Servants*

SERM. XII.

vants to obey, his Servants ye are, to whom Ye *obey*. And conſequently, If You obey the Commands of GOD, You are the Servants of GOD: But if You obey Thoſe of *Sin*, You are the *Servants* of Sin; and have departed from the Service of God. And the *Service* of God being the Practice of all *Righteouſneſs*, in every Inſtance equally; it is impoſſible that You ſhould at the ſame Time be the *Servants* of God, and yet tranſgreſs Any of the Rules of that *Righteouſneſs*.

How vain therefore, and groundleſs, are the *Hopes* of Thoſe, who pretend to divide themſelves, and their *Services*, between God, and *this* World; between Duty to this ſupreme Maſter, and any Sort of *Vice*; They themſelves may ſee, by conſidering ſeriouſly what the *Service* of God is: Not a Prayer, or a Tear, or an Act of Devotion; but a continued *Tenor* of good Works; a Progreſs and Improvement in all Virtue. This is a *Service*, which admits of no Remiſſion of Care and Diligence; and which can brook no Rival. And therefore, the Man, whenever this is neglected, or broken into, immediately ceaſeth to be the *Servant* of that God, who cannot be truly ſerved, unleſs He be ſerved with the whole Heart. The Reaſonableneſs of what hath been ſaid under

this Head is ſo manifeſt, that it will make Way for what I next propoſed; Which was

III. To diſſuade you from any ſuch *Service* to Mammon, *i. e.* Riches, or any other Thing, or Perſon, in the Univerſe, as will make it impoſſible for you to perform that *Service* which is indiſpenſably due to GOD. For, it having appeared plainly, that it is impoſſible to ſerve, or obey, any Two Contrary and Oppoſite Maſters; and conſequently, impoſſible for the ſame *Man*, to be the Servant of *Mammon*, and of GOD; the only Queſtion is, Which of the two oppoſite *Maſters*, who contend for his *Service*, He ſhall chuſe for his Lord and Director: whether the True *God*, or the falſe Gods of this World, *Pleaſure*, *Profit*, or *Honour*, that ſet themſelves up againſt *his* Right, and in Oppoſition to *his* Will: for *One* or *Other* of theſe, He muſt chuſe.

Now, there is this, at firſt Thought, to be ſaid of the Service of God, that the greateſt Part of Thoſe who are truly the Servants of *Mammon*, or ſome other evil Principle, know not how to throw off all Regard to their *rightful Maſter*; but even, whilſt they are *ſerving* his *Enemy* truly, would gladly ever now and then, return to the *Service* of God, in ſome Inſtances, or other. By this They themſelves give a remarkable Teſtimony that

SERM. XII.

Almighty God hath a laſting, true, and certain, Title to their *Service*; whilſt They cannot be eaſy in their Minds, without paying him *ſome* Sort of *Service*. On the other hand, all that the greateſt Votaries of this World can ſay for that ſincere Service they pay to their *other* Maſters, is, that Inclination ſtrongly leads them to it; that they hope it is not ſo bad as it ſeems to be; and that they deſign ſtill, one time or other, to have due Regard to the *Service* of God, their true, and rightful Maſter. But how long will ſuch Pretenſes ſatisfy reaſonable Creatures? Only long enough, to ſerve to make them miſerable, when they come to ſee, too late, the Unhappineſs of that *Service*, in which they have engaged themſelves.

For this is the Caſe. Almighty God hath ſuch a right to your Services, that is, to your Obedience to all his Laws, that, in the midſt of your ſerving other Maſters, you are forced often to recurr to his Service, and to pretend to pay him ſome Sort of Obedience. Now, you have ſeen that this interrupted Obedience, this Half-duty, which is only ſo much as your other Lords, your Luſts and Paſſions, your Covetouſneſs, or Luxury, will permit you to pay Him, is not truly *his Service*; and that you cannot pretend, by ſuch a limited and broken Obedience,

Obedience, to prove yourſelves his *Servants*. Would you, therefore, be his Servants, ſo as to have that Reward which He hath promiſed to his true and faithful *Servants?* There is an abſolute Neceſſity that you ſhould immediately come out of the *Chains* of other contrary Lords; that you ſhould break their Fetters; and renounce every Degree of that *Service*, which *Mammon*, or any Sort of evil Principle, requires of you. For God's *Service* cannot be *his* true Service, unleſs it be perfectly free from all ſuch Regard to any thing elſe in the World, as is inconſiſtent with your conſtant Regard to all *His* Laws. His *Service* never can be eaſy to Yourſelves within, till You have thus got rid of all the Influences of impetuous Inclination to the Service of all contrary *Maſters:* nor can it be ever pleaſing to Him, till it is that uniform, ſincere, unmixed, Obedience, which He hath a right to, by all poſſible Titles. SERM. XII.

On the other hand, conſider what Title, what Right, any other Thing in the World, oppoſite to Him, hath to our Regards. What do we owe to them? Are they the firſt Cauſes of our Beings? Are they the primary Occaſions of our Happineſs? Will they, at the End, ſtand us in ſtead, againſt the Attacks of Adverſity here, or the Diſpleaſure of an offended God hereafter? Are they ſtable, unmoveable,

SERM. XII.

ble, certain, unshaken, Goods? or, Are we certain of always having them for our Comforts and Supports? or, Are they not rather, vain, imaginary, moveable, and transitory Things; and we ourselves, hasting away with a never ceasing Pace; till all Correspondence with them is entirely interrupted, never to be renewed again? And are such Things as These, fit to be chosen for our *Masters?* or, Are we of that Nature, as that it can become Us to make ourselves their Servants? By no Means: God, and Reason reclaim Us from all Approaches to such a *Service*; God, and Reason, which are to Us infinitely more than all the World besides.

If therefore we would have God for our *Friend*, we must chuse him first for our *Master*; and his Laws for the Rules of our *Service*. And if we would have our own Reason, and Conscience, at Peace with Us; we must act the Part to which they direct: and that Part is ever the *Service* of that God, to whom we owe ourselves. Whatever hinders us from a constant Application of ourselves to that *Service*; whatever opposeth us in it, or would draw us off from it, is to be disregarded, and cast from us with Courage and Constancy. And, it being certain that the *Service* of *Sin*, is utterly inconsistent with the *Service*

of God; it is certain, that if we would *ſerve* God, as we ought, in Duty and Intereſt, to do; We muſt firſt ſhake off all Regard to his Enemy; we muſt, if we think of being his *Servants*, unto all Righteouſneſs, ſhake off that *Yoke* of *Servitude* which *other Maſters* would impoſe upon us. And if we be truly willing to do this, there will remain Nothing to hinder us from giving up ourſelves to the true *Service* of GOD. SERM. XII.

IV. To this I ſhall now endeavour to perſuade you, and ſo conclude. His Title, or *Right*, to this *Service*, is indiſputable. He hath created us what we are. We owe to him all we have, and all we can ever enjoy; and the very Poſſibility of enjoying any thing. He hath bought us again into his Poſſeſſion, by the Life and Death of his Son. To him we owe this freſh, and greater, Opportunity of making ourſelves happy in his *Service*. And, how can we deny a *Service* due on ſo many, and ſo excellent, Accounts? The *Rules* of his *Service* are his Laws, by which He governs us, and to which he requires our Obedience. And theſe are *Reaſon*, and *Light*; the Tranſcripts of his own *moral Perfections*, which conſtitute his own Happineſs. They are the Dictates of eternal Truth; and every Step we take in the

SERM. XII.

Paths of them, brings Peace and Joy along with it: in which they entirely differ from the Laws of every *other ſinful* Principle, that would draw us aſide from them.

The *Rewards* of this *Service* (for we *ſerve* not God for nought) are unexpreſſible. The *preſent* Reward is all that inward Satisfaction which a well diſpoſed Mind can take, in the Conſciouſneſs of a good and reaſonable Conduct; and the Thought of having God's Approbation. The *future* Reward, after the Service is over, is all the Happineſs of God's Preſence, or, of thoſe more immediate Communications of his Love, and Favour, which he hath promiſed to all his faithful *Servants*. In the *Scripture-Style*, by being his *Servants*, they become his *Sons*; and, by being his *Sons*, they are adopted into the Inheritance of the Saints in *Glory*.

What is it now, I pray, that can come in Competition with this *Reaſonable Service?* Can uncertain *Riches*, or empty *Honour*, or inſatiable *Luxury*, pretend to any thing like this? What Title can they ſhew to the *Services* They claim? or, what can they produce in Favour of their own Right? Can they ſpeak Peace and Satisfaction to the Mind within? Are their *Laws* the equitable *Laws* of *Reaſon*, and obeyed with the Approbation of our Conſciences? or, will they entitle to any, the leaſt

Reward

Reward hereafter? What are their *Laws*, indeed, but the hard Commands of Tyrants, accompanied by Diſquiet, here, and ending in Unhappineſs and eternal Death, hereafter; flattering with Images of Pleaſure, but leading to certain Pains?

Here then let us ſtop, and acknowledge that it is Almighty God alone, who can juſtly claim Us, as his Servants; He alone, who hath the Reward of our Services, in his Hand; and hath Power to execute what his Goodneſs hath promiſed us; and He, alone, therefore, who demands, and deſerves, our whole Service. We cannot, We ſee plainly, ſerve *Him*, whilſt we ſerve *other* contrary *Maſters*. To him, therefore, without Delay, without Reſerve, without Hypocriſy, let us give up ourſelves, as true *Servants*; and ſhew ourſelves ſuch, by our ſincere, conſtant, and uniform Obedience to all his holy Laws: that ſo we may, at laſt, with the good and faithful *Servant* in the *Parable*, enter into the *Joy* of our Lord.

The AMBITION *of* CHRIST'S *Diſciples reproved.*

SERMON XIII.

MATTHEW XX. 26, 27.

But it ſhall not be ſo amongſt you: but whoſoever will be Great *amongſt you, let him be your* Miniſter: *and whoſoever will be* Chief *amongſt you, let him be your* Servant.

SERM. XIII.

THE Occaſion of this Leſſon of our *Lord's* is particularly related in the *Verſes* immediately before theſe Words. *The Mother of Zebedee's Children*, (*viz. James* and *John*,) being very deſirous of ſhewing the great Affection ſhe had for Them, and her Zeal to promote their Intereſt, came with Them to our *Bleſſed Lord*, whoſe Diſciples they were, and, with the proper Marks of Reſpect, let him know that ſhe had a *certain Thing* to aſk of Him. Our bleſſed Lord, always inclined to grant to all his Follow-

ers

SERM. XIII.

ers every Thing truly good for them, presently asked her what Favour it was she desired? It appeared by what followed *that She* was not content with the ordinary Marks of his Kindness, dispensed to her *Sons*, in common with his *other* Apostles; but hoped for some very extraordinary and signal Token of his *Love* to her two Children; Something that she esteemed the greatest Gift and Honour they were capable of receiving from him. And this was, That, he being the *Messiah*, and his glorious *Kingdom* being now to be opened (agreeably to her Expectation, and that of all the *Jews*) with the greatest earthly Glory, her *two Sons*; might have the two principal Places in this *Kingdom*; and might sit, the *one* on his Right Hand, and the *other* on his Left, as his two greatest Favorites, and chief Officers. This was her Notion of Good and Happiness; and according to That, *This* was her Petition.

Our *Lord*, with the greatest Goodness, turned himself to the *two Apostles*, in whose Name, and with whose Consent this Petition was made, and said, *Ye know not what ye ask: that is*, you are not yet sensible what a Scene of Difficulties *They* must go through, who desire to be *Great* in my *Kingdom*; and what it is that is requisite to the making

making you the higheſt amongſt my Favorites: *Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I ſhall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptiſm that I am baptized with?* You muſt not expect to arrive at any Dignity in *my Kingdom*, without following my Steps. And are You able to do as I, your Maſter, muſt do; and to undergo what I muſt undergo, before I arrive at my own Glory? The *two Diſciples*, not knowing well what He meant, and being poſſeſſed of the Opinion that, let theſe *Difficulties* and *Diſtreſſes* be what They would, His *Kingdom* would diſplay itſelf, *after* their ſhort Continuance, in all worldly Pomp, and *Victory* over all the Enemies of his People; and ſtill inflamed with the ſame Deſire of *Power*, and *Preeminence*, anſwered him with a great deal of Confidence, that They were *able* to follow him, and to *drink* of the ſame *Cup* that he ſhould drink of, whatever it ſhould be.

Our Lord, well knowing that, in the midſt of all their Ignorance, They had a ſincere Zeal for *Him*, and his Service, and that they would be great Inſtruments of good in his *Church*, ſaid unto Them, *Ye ſhall, indeed, drink of my Cup*; that is, (if we ſpeak more plainly than our *Lord* at this Time deſigned to ſpeak,) Ye ſhall, indeed, be perſecuted and afflicted, according to the Example of your *Maſter*;

SERM. XIII.

Maſter; and go through a Scene of ſuch like Difficulties as I myſelf muſt; and, by this Means, make yourſelves fit to be glorified in my *Kingdom*. But, ſuppoſing you thus to follow my Steps in this uneaſy Way to *Glory*; yet, *To ſit on my Right Hand and on my Left, is not mine to give; but it ſhall be given to Them, for whom it is prepared of my Father*; that is, the chief Places of *Dignity*, in my heavenly Kingdom, are not now, to be diſpoſed of, according to my arbitrary Will and Pleaſure; or to be given away any otherwiſe than as my *Father* has ſeen fit, in his perfect and unerring Wiſdom, to decree and order them.

When the other *Ten* Apoſtles heard what had paſſed betwixt *Jeſus*, and the *Two Brethren* and their *Mother*; what *They* had ſollicited, and how great their Ambition was; They, as little knowing the Nature of their *Maſter's Kingdom*, as the other *Two*, and as much deſiring the great Poſts and Honours in it, were very angry at the Requeſt of *James* and *John*, and very uneaſy at their aſpiring Deſigns. But *Jeſus* called them *all* to him, and took Occaſion from the *Petition* of the *two Brethren*, and from the *Pride* of the other *Ten*, to inſtruct them a little farther in the Nature of his Kingdom; and to teach them, that though in the Nations of this World, Thoſe were reputed the

the *Greateſt* who had the greateſt outward Dignities, and the higheſt *Authority*; yet, in *his Kingdom, They* ſhould be accounted the *Greateſt*, who had leaſt *Pride*, and leaſt *Ambition*; and who were moſt ready to ſtoop to do all good Offices, and to *miniſter*, as Servants, to their Brethren. And this *Inſtruction* he concludes with his own *Example* (ver. 28.) *even as the Son of Man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his Life a Ranſom for many:* as if he had ſaid; As I myſelf, whom you will eaſily acknowledge to be the *Greateſt* in *my own Kingdom*, think it no Diminution of that Greatneſs to condeſcend to all Inſtances of *Love* and Kindneſs to Mankind; and now am come into the World to be a *Servant* to *Men*, and, at laſt to dye a ſervile and ignominious Death for their Sakes, and to procure their Happineſs. SERM. XIII.

Having now related to you, and explained, as I went along, this *Hiſtory* of the *Ambition* of the *Two Brethren*; their *Mother's* Petition; the Anſwer of our *Lord*; the *Indignation* of the *other Apoſtles*; and our *Saviour's* Inſtruction, occaſioned by their miſtaken Notions: it is my Deſign to conſider, not the *Words* of the *Text* only; but what other particulars ſhall offer themſelves, upon the Review of this whole *Hiſtory*, and the *Circumſtances* of it.

And

SERM. XIII.

And the Obſervations I ſhall make at preſent, are Theſe:

I. This *Story* gives Us Occaſion to obſerve, how inclined Men are to miſtake their own Happineſs; and how apt Many *Parents* are to overlook the real Good, and true Intereſt, of their *Children*; and to frame their Wiſhes with regard to *Them*, rather with a View to the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than to their true and laſting Happineſs.

II. This Hiſtory gives Occaſion to obſerve the great Tendency, and ſtrong Bias, there is in human Nature, towards outward Dignity, and Superiority over Others.

III. We may obſerve from it, what Notions the *Jews* had, at this Time, of the *Kingdom* of their *Meſſiah*, and the *Nature* of his *Glory*.

IV. It concerns us principally to regard what our bleſſed Lord here delivers and intimates about the *Nature* of his own Kingdom; and the Method of attaining to the greateſt Dignities, and higheſt Stations, in it.

I. This *Story* gives us Occaſion to obſerve, how inclined Perſons are to miſtake their own Happineſs; and how apt too many *Parents* are to overlook the real Good and true Intereſt of

of their Children; and to frame their Wiſhes with regard to *Them*, rather with a View to the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than to their true and laſting Happineſs. SERM. XIII.

Here were Two of our *Lord's Diſciples*, who had been his Followers for ſome Time, ſo groſly ignorant in the Doctrine he had delivered, as to think that they were not capable of greater Happineſs than They ſhould experience, if they were placed in an eminent Poſt of Honour and Dignity, above their Brethren, in that *Kingdom* of their *Lord*, which, according to their Notion of it, was very ſoon to be opened, full of earthly Glories and temporal Splendour. And here was their *Mother*, who thought ſhe could not give a greater Proof of her Love for her Children, than by joining with Them, in what was truly *their* Petition, and adding her Requeſt to our *Lord*, in order to procure them this great Dignity which they aimed at. How much better had They conſulted their true Happineſs, had they aſked to be inſtructed in the certain Method of obtaining and improving All thoſe Virtues and Graces, which are the eternal Ornaments of a Chriſtian Mind? And how much greater a Demonſtration had their *Mother* given, of her True Love to them, if ſhe had checked their forward *Ambition*, and aſpiring Thoughts;

SERM. XIII.

Thoughts; and petitioned our *Lord* for his favorable Directions, in order to make her Sons glorious in all that was lovely in his Eyes, and agreeable to his great Design?

After our Lord's Reſurrection, They were ſufficiently convinced of the Folly of their former *Addreſs* to *Him*; and found, by Experience, that *His Kingdom* was to be eſtabliſhed by Perſecution and Hardſhips; and a Place of Dignity in it, to be obtained by the Practice of the loweſt *Humility*. How happy had it been, if the *Chriſtians* of all ſucceeding Ages, had been wiſe by their Example; and had learned, from their Weakneſs, and our Lord's Inſtruction occaſioned by it, to check and conquer this ſame Temper in Themſelves?

But it is too viſible, That, though the Nature of Chriſt's *heavenly Kingdom* is ſo plainly declared, and the Way to the *Glories* of it ſo clearly pointed out, through the Path of *Humility*, in the Writings of his *Apoſtles*, and his own Diſcourſes; yet, there are Few that can perſuade themſelves to think the Crowns of Heaven, upon the Terms of the *Goſpel*, worthy of ſo warm a Contention, and ſo eager a Purſuit as any temporal Superiority, or earthly Dignity, is. How much Time, and how much Attendance, and how much Importunity, can Men employ, in ſolliciting ſome worldly

worldly Honour, or Poſt of Rank, above Others, who perhaps, grudge to beſtow a few Minutes of a Day upon the Thoughts of Religion, and the Purſuit after the good Things of another World? How many Men, who know the *Tenor* of the *Goſpel*, and profeſs to believe it, are ſeen to lay out the Strength and Eagerneſs of their Deſires, for *Themſelves*, upon the *Poſſeſſions*, or *Pleaſures*, here below; without mixing, perhaps, one hearty *Prayer* for *Poſſeſſions*, and *Pleaſures*, of another Nature? And no wonder, if ſuch Perſons, as far as They concern Themſelves with the *Happineſs* or *Unhappineſs* of their *Children*, ſhould chuſe to fix their *Wiſhes* for *Them*, on *the Things which are ſeen*, as the Inſtruments of all Good; rather than on *the Things, which are not ſeen.*

We may judge, without Uncharitableneſs, that the Motions of their Hearts all centre in this World, by the indefatigable Pains They will be at, to raiſe their *Children* to *State* and *Riches*, here below; and the little Concern they expreſs, to make them *Great* by *Goodneſs*; by the Practice of *Charity* and *Humility*, and all the other moral Virtues. There are but *Few* that can *taſte* this Sort of Greatneſs and Glory, *Themſelves*; and *Few* therefore, who will recommend it to Thoſe, in whom They

SERM. XIII.

are moſt nearly concerned. *Some*, I truſt and believe, there are, who are not aſhamed of a different and better Conduct. But the Number is great of Thoſe, who are ſo blind and miſtaken in their Notions of *Happineſs*, that they too often wiſh and procure, for Themſelves, and their *Children*, *Miſery* inſtead of it; whilſt They are labouring only after ſuch *Glories*, *Greatneſs*, and *Wealth*, as, in the End, often prove the greateſt *Diſhonour*, and the trueſt *Poverty*, to an intelligent Being. And, as this is the Caſe, Who can wonder, That, by the Many, *He* is not accounted ſo good a Father, whoſe chief Regards are expreſſed in what tends to the real and laſting Happineſs of his *Son*; as *He*, who leaves no Methods unattempted, to raiſe him to ſuch a Highth of Greatneſs; or to overwhelm Him with ſuch Hoards of Money; as muſt bring along with them the greateſt Danger to his Virtue and *Eternal* Intereſt.

II. The *Hiſtory* now before us, gives us occaſion to obſerve the great *Tendency*, and ſtrong *Bias*, there is, in human Nature, to the Love of *Superiority*, in Power, and Place, over our Fellow-Creatures in the ſame Society.

The *Twelve Apoſtles* were now, as it were, divided into *two* Parties; and both equally

tainted with the same Sort of aspiring Thoughts. *Two* of them hoped to have prevented the Attempts of the *Others*, and to have secured to themselves the *Places* of prime *Dignity* in their Master's *Kingdom*. The other *Ten* disdained to be thought inferior, or subject, to *Them*; and conceived a great Anger against them for their Design. It may, indeed, raise some Wonder, that such a *Temper* should at all take place in the Breasts of Those, who saw Nothing in their own *Master*, more remarkable, than the greatest Instances of the contrary Spirit, of Meekness and Humility. SERM. XIII.

If any thing can be an Excuse for this, and abate our Wonder, it is, that they All thus strove for Dignity, and worldly Glory, when they thought their Master's *Kingdom*, a *Kingdom* only of this World. But who can forbear to wonder more, as well as to lament, that *Christians*, who cannot read a *Page* in the *Gospel*, without reading their own indispensable Obligation to all the Offices of Humility, for the Good of Others, should be so devoted to the Love of *Superiority*, as we every Day may observe them to be? What a Contention does there often appear, in our World, for *Place* and *Precedence?* what Passion, and Revenge, for an Affront put upon the supposed Honour and Dignity of a Man? What a Care

SERM. XIII.

and Caution, about every *Punctilio* of Ceremony, and Obſervance? What a Noiſe, about *Family*, and *Titles*; the Antiquity of a *Name*; the Dignity of *Predeceſſors*; or, the like Sort of Excellencies? Nay, what a prodigious Value is there often ſet, even upon ſo low a Matter, as Equipage and Attendance?

It would weary one to ſpeak, or even to think, of the Vanities and Follies of weak Mortals, upon this Head; the Uneaſineſſes, Quarrels, Jealouſies, and Breaches, it occaſions; the inexcuſable Miſpenſe of Time, and Neglect of all that is great and good, which this Temper introduces into the World; and the great Miſchiefs which, in various Shapes, have proceeded from it, in every Age. And yet, Mankind ſeem not, in the leaſt Degree, wiſer for their Experience; or at all the more diſpoſed to ſet only a juſt Value upon thoſe *Diſtinctions* which the Nature of Society makes proper amongſt Men; or, to reſiſt that Inclination (that *perverſe* Inclination) there is, in human Nature, to the Sweets of *Superiority*, and *Power* over Others.

It is one of the meaneſt *Characters* we can draw, of any Men, to deſcribe Them, as ſearching out Opportunities of depreſſing and ſinking Others *below* them; and finding out continually ſome new Diſtinctions, if the old

Ones are worn out, in order to place their *Brethren* in a meaner and more contemptible Rank than Themselves; and thinking the most empty Reasons sufficient for this ignoble and unmanly Purpose. And yet this is so true, and so universally observed, that it is constantly lamented by all good Men; and constantly ridiculed by All, who make Themselves publickly merry with the Follies of Mankind. Thus are the Minds of reasonable Creatures busied about *Trifles*, which divert them from Matters of infinitely greater Concern; and are founded upon such *Maxims* only, as appear to be unworthy of their Attention, either as Men, or as Members of human Society. Let us now proceed.

III. The *third Observation*, I said, we might make from this *History*, related to Those *Notions* which were, at that Time, common amongst the *Jews*, about the Nature of the *Kingdom* of their *Messiah*.

We find, in this *Passage* of the *Gospel*, not only *James* and *John*, with their *Mother*, but also the other *Ten Apostles*, all agreeing in the same Expectation of a Temporal *Kingdom* of *Christ*; and of Places of *Eminence*, and *worldly* Authority, to be enjoyed under Him: as appears from the *Lesson* our Lord reads to them

SERM. XIII.

all at last, about the Way to *Greatness* in his Dispensation; and from many other Places of the *New Testament:* from which we may gather, that the *Apostles* themselves could not, before They were better instructed, so much as bear the Thought of their *Master's Suffering* Death; or of his reigning in any other *Kingdom*, but *One* full of this World's Majesty and Glory. They did, indeed, cleave to Him, in his low and mean Estate, convinced by the powerful Works he shewed forth: but They were continually watching, and longing, till he should open another Scene, and *reveal himself to the World*, by *restoring the Kingdom to* Israel. Thus had these well-meaning Men the same low and groveling Expectations, which were entertained by the Crowd around them.

For the *Jews* universally neither looked for, nor desired, any *Messiah*, but *One*, who should crown them with the Glories of this World; and clothe their temporal *Enemies* with Shame: *One*, who should *bless* them with Victory, and Plenty, and Riches, and Power. Nor would the far greater Part of that People accept of any *Salvation*, or *Blessing*, which could be offered, but such a *Salvation*, and such a *Blessing*, as They had figured to Themselves upon the Principles of this World only. The

saving

saving Them from their Sins, which was the *Salvation* of *Jesus*; and the *Blessing* Them, by *turning Them from their Iniquities*, which was the *Blessing* of his Gospel: *These* were Kinds of *Salvation*, and *Blessing*, which They thought too mean, and contemptible Offers, for *their Messiah* to make; or for Them to accept. They had no Relish for such Sort of Happiness: and desired no Part in a Kingdom, which was not *of this World.* SERM. XIII.

The *Apostles*, indeed, were sincere and honest, whilst they were so grosly mistaken. But the Bulk of that Nation were led to these Notions through a Course of Wickedness, and Hypocrisy. No Wonder, therefore, that those Persons should go on to greater and greater Degrees of Hardness of Heart, and reject a spiritual *Messiah*, who had before given themselves up to their own Lusts and Passions; and had shewn, by their Manners, that there was, in their Opinions, no greater Happiness to Mankind, than the Enjoyments of Flesh and Blood; the Glories, Profits, and Pleasures, of this World. This was their *Principle*. And the *Argument* from this *Principle* was very agreeable to it, *viz.* That, the *Blessing* of their *Messiah*, who was to make them *happy*, could consist in Nothing, but what They themselves accounted their greatest *Happiness*; and, No-

SERM. XIII.

thing being, by Them, accounted so essential to *That*, as these *temporal* good Things: *This Blessing*, therefore, must consist in granting, and securing, to Them, the unbounded Enjoyment of what They so highly valued. But,

IV. It concerns us chiefly to regard what our *Lord* delivers, upon this Occasion, concerning the Nature of his own *Kingdom*; and the Method of attaining the greatest *Honours* in it. And,

First, It is plainly implied in his *Answer* to the *Petition* made to Him, in Behalf of the two Brethren-Disciples, that his *Kingdom* was so far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Glory; that his true *Servants* were to expect to meet with Persecution, and all evil Treatment, for their Master's Sake. And,

Secondly, The *Instruction* which He gives to all his twelve *Apostles* at last, expressly taught *Them* that the Way to be *great* and glorious in his *Kingdom*, both here, and hereafter, is to be *humble*; and truly disposed to condescend to one another, and to stoop to all good Offices, for the Service of their Brethren.

First, I say, It is plainly implied in our Lord's Answer to the Petition of *James* and *John*, and their *Mother*, that his *Kingdom* was so far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Magnificence, that,

that, in this World, all his true *Servants* were to expect to meet with Perſecution, and great Hardſhips, for their Maſter's Sake. This *Anſwer* is in the 22d Verſe: where, inſtead of feeding them with Hopes of enjoying great Power and worldly Grandeur, under *Him*, he mentions the *Cup*, He himſelf was to drink of; and the *Baptiſm*, He himſelf was to be baptized with; and propoſes the *ſame* Cup, and the *ſame* Baptiſm, to Them, for their Portion, before they could come to any Glory in his Kingdom. It is true, the *ordinary* Courſe of a Chriſtian's Life, in theſe later Ages, is not expoſed to ſuch *Perſecutions*, and to ſuch ſevere Trials, as the Lives of the *Apoſtles* were, at the Time when They were ſent forth to be the firſt Preachers of *Chriſtianity*. But yet, This is applicable to all ſincere *Chriſtians*, in ſome Degree, That They muſt drink of their Lord's *Cup*, and be baptized with his *Baptiſm*; that They muſt follow him through evil Report, and evil Treatment; through Reproaches and Diſgraces; and through many, not inconſiderable, Hardſhips, though not perhaps ſo far, as to a *Croſs*, or to a *Stake*. They may not be called to part with *Life* itſelf, for the Sake of their *Faith*, or their *Integrity*: But they will certainly have occaſion to exerciſe a great deal of *Patience*, and *Courage*, if they reſolve, in all Caſes, to

SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII.

to approve themſelves *his Diſciples.* For there never yet was any Age of the World known to be ſo indulgent to *Virtue*; and ſo kind to the Practice of all the *Chriſtian* Duties; as not ſometimes to caſt many Difficulties, and many Grievances, in the Paths of the virtuous *Chriſtian*, under ſome Pretenſe, or other.

But the principal Thing that we ought to remark, is, the *Inſtruction* our Lord gives to his *Diſciples*, upon the Sight of their indecent *Pride* and *Ambition*, in the Words of the *Text:* By which We are plainly taught, as I obſerved juſt now, in the

Second Place, That the Way to be great and glorious in his *Kingdom*, both here and hereafter, is to be *humble*; and diſpoſed to condeſcend to all good Offices; and to make ourſelves the *leaſt* amongſt our Brethren, rather than to contend for Superiority and Preeminence.

This was our *Lord's* Inſtruction. But it was a *Leſſon* too hard for the *Apoſtles* Themſelves, at the Time when it was firſt given Them; and is daily ſeen to be too hard for the generality of *Chriſtians*, though it be ſo indiſpenſably inſiſted upon, in the *Goſpel.* Not that it is, or can be, ſenſibly *hard*, or painful, to *Thoſe*, who will conſider what They are originally; and how much Occaſion,

and

and how great Reason, they have to be *humble* and *lowly:* Not that it doth not carry its own Reward along with it, when duly practised; freeing the Soul from all those Uneasinesses that attend upon Pride and Ambition; and filling it with all the Quiet, and Peace, and Satisfaction, naturally flowing from the Contrary: Not that it is not reasonable and becoming all Men, in itself, standing in no Need of a positive Command to enforce it: but it is a *hard* Lesson, because Men have been generally trained up in the Notions of Pride and Ambition; and therefore, are seldom disposed to regard what is truly reasonable, and fitting their Natures, so much as what is agreeable to their present Inclinations, and the Practice and Customs of a corrupted World. SERM. XIII.

Many are the *Considerations*, by which we might inforce upon Ourselves, and our own Consciences, the Practice of this *Instruction* in the *Text*. But, because our blessed Lord uses no Argument, in this Place, to inforce it upon his *Disciples*, except his own *Example*; I shall, therefore, confine myself, at present, to the *same Argument*; and endeavour briefly to shew the Strength of it, with regard to *Ourselves*, as well as His *Apostles*.

He is *our* Lord and Master, as He was *theirs*. And, therefore, we cannot think it beneath

SERM. XIII.

beneath Us, to behave Ourſelves, as *He* did. This he himſelf, upon ſeveral Occaſions, judged to be a good Argument to recommend any moral Duty, That He himſelf practiſed it. *Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly*, is his own Direction; in the Caſe of that *Humility*, I am now ſpeaking of. And, indeed, We muſt either throw off all Relation to Him, or acknowledge it to be a very forcible Conſideration. He was far exalted above Us, before He deſcended to converſe with us here below; high above all Principalities and Powers; above the greateſt and wealthieſt and moſt powerful of Us, the poor inconſiderable Inhabitants of this Earth. But, notwithſtanding this infinite Diſtance betwixt him and us, He pitied Us, and condeſcended to be ſubject to our Infirmities; to live a poor and deſpicable Life in our wretched World; and, at laſt to lay down his Life, at the Command and Decree of a Man. He knew perfectly well what was becoming a reaſonable Being; what Behaviour was beneath the Dignity of an underſtanding Nature, and what was not ſo. And his *Notions* of that *Dignity* appear from hence, That, during his Abode amongſt Men, He diveſted himſelf of all *Appearance* of Grandeur, and ſtooped to miniſter to the *meaneſt* of his *Servants*; whoſe Intereſt He regarded, both in his Life, and in his Death.

Death. And it is very remarkable, and ought to be taken into this *Argument*, what St. *Paul* affirms, That for this very Humiliation, and *making himself of no Reputation*, and descending to wear *the Form of a Servant*, God exalted Him, and crowned him with Glory inexpressible. SERM. XIII.

From this, then, we cannot but thus reason with Ourselves. If He, who was so great, and so wise, did not think it beneath his Dignity, to condescend to such Instances of *Humility*, as we are never called to; to live such a Life of *Lowliness*, and die such a Death, in order to minister to the Necessities of Mankind; We cannot think it beneath the Dignity of the Highest of Us, to imitate this great Example; and even make Ourselves, by the lowest Instances of Love, truly subservient to the good of our Brethren, in this World, and their true and eternal Interest, in That to come.

When we look upon this great *Example*; and see our *Lord* bending Himself to all Acts of Charity, towards Those who were so much below him; how can we think it right to stand upon little Niceties, and Punctilios; or becoming Us, to find out any trifling Excuses to exempt Ourselves from doing the like good Offices to our Fellow-Creatures, in the same *lowly* way? Let not his *Example*, therefore, be ever out of our

SERM. XIII.

our Minds, when any occaſion of *Humility* preſents itſelf to us. Let us conſider how readily that *Lord*, whom we ſerve, would have laid hold on ſuch Opportunities: and we ſhall be aſhamed to avoid them Ourſelves. Let us look upon thoſe Glories which He is ſaid to have acquired by his *Humility*; and they will animate us to bear even the *Reproach* of *Humility* here below, if *Reproach* can ever follow ſo lovely a Virtue. And, as *He* is *ſet down at the Right Hand of* God; and has *a Name given him above every Name*, for the Sake of his *Lowlineſs* and *Condeſcenſion*; ſo We, by the ſame *Practice*, may hope to ſit down at *his* Right Hand, and to be crowned with *Glory* and *Honour* in the Preſence of God.

The

The Different *Characters of* John *the* Baptiſt, *and* Jeſus Chriſt.

SERMON XIV.

LUKE vii. 33, 34.

John *the* Baptiſt *came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and ye ſay, he hath a Devil. The* Son of Man *is come, eating and drinking, and ye ſay, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.*

SERM. XIV.

THIS is our bleſſed Lord's own Account both of the Manner of Life uſed by *John* the *Baptiſt*, his Forerunner, and by *Himſelf*; and of the Perverſeneſs of the *Jews*, in miſinterpreting and cenſuring the Conduct of them Both. *John the Baptiſt came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine*; *i. e.* he avoided all common Converſation with Men, and retired from the Noiſe of the Multitude; not ſo much as allowing himſelf the Enjoyment

SERM. XIV.

Enjoyment of human Society frequently; or laying hold on any Opportunities of *eating, and drinking*, with the reſt of the World about Him. And the *Jews*, becauſe they were not diſpoſed to receive his Doctrine, (which was the ſevere Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment,) and his Teſtimony concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*, repreſented him as a Perſon diſturbed in his Brain, poſſeſſed by ſome evil and melancholy Spirit; and led, by That, into the Retirement, and Solitude, and Auſterity, which he ſeemed to affect.

Well then, one would have thought, by this, that if a *Prophet* ſhould appear amongſt them, with all the Signs of a divine Miſſion; and converſe freely with Them; not refuſing to be preſent at their Entertainments, or to mix himſelf with them, upon all juſt Occaſions; that This ſhould be quite acceptable to Them; and all their Prejudices be removed. But it was far otherwiſe. For *the Son of Man*, the *Meſſiah*, *Jeſus Chriſt*, *came eating and drinking*; *i. e.* converſing freely with Mankind; partaking with them, upon all proper Occaſions, of the ordinary Refreſhments of Life, without Scruple; and laying hold on all Opportunities of a free Society with the World around Him: and yet This alſo was ſo far from pleaſing, that They

They only changed their Note of Diſlike and Cenſure; and ſaid, *Behold* a Man, addicted to his Appetite, a Lover of Wine, and a Friend to the *Worſt* of Men.

And, indeed, He was *a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*, in the trueſt Senſe of the Word, *Friendſhip: i.e.* His great Deſign was to do them *real* Service, and to lead them to *Repentance* and Happineſs. But it was ſo manifeſt a Piece of wicked Scandal and Injuſtice, that he was *intemperate*, in thoſe Opportunities which only he could take of converſing with the Men, whom he came to ſave; that no Perſon of common Senſe; No One, whoſe Eyes were not blinded with the darkeſt Prejudice, could poſſibly believe, much leſs, report, ſuch a Thing. So far from it, that Nothing was more viſible, than the greateſt and ſtricteſt Abſtinence from all Exceſs, through his whole Life and Converſation: no Delight in the pampering of his Body, or the pleaſing of his Senſes; but a conſtant Regard to the Rules of Sobriety and Temperance. But, waving this, I ſhall return to my Deſign in chooſing theſe Words, at this Time: and That will appear in the Conſideration of theſe following Particulars.

I. The different Behaviour of St. *John Baptiſt*, and our bleſſed *Saviour*, with Reſpect to

SERM. XIV.

human Society; and the Agreeableneſs of it to their different Deſigns.

II. The groſs *Miſinterpretation* put by the *Jews*, upon this their different Conduct; and the *Leſſon* we may learn from thence. After which I deſign,

III. To ſay ſomething, with reſpect to theſe two different Methods of Life: That of *Auſterity* and *Retirement*; and *That* of a more free Enjoyment of human Society.

I. We ſee plainly, in the very Words now before us, the different Behaviour and Conduct of our bleſſed *Saviour*, and *John* the *Baptiſt*, with reſpect to human Society: and ſhall preſently obſerve the *Agreeableneſs* of it to their different *Deſigns*. *John* the *Baptiſt* choſe a *Wilderneſs*, or Deſert, for the Scene of his Appearance and Action; avoided the Places of Concourſe and Society; and took upon him, in the beſt Senſe, the Habit and Vow of Auſterity, and the ſtricteſt Abſtinence. I call it the Scene of his Appearance, and Action: for this Retirement was not, as ſome have been in later Ages, choſen by Him for an unactive and idle Life of *Contemplation*, and uſeleſs *Speculation*; nor with the leaſt Thought of withdrawing himſelf from the Eyes and Ears of a vain

and wicked World, by a voluntary and pleaſing Recluſeneſs within Walls and Fences. But it was embraced by Him, on quite contrary, and very uſeful Accounts.

He was to preach, and therefore to be known, to his Country-men. And accordingly, the Deſert he choſe, at his opening his Miniſtry, was very near to *Jeruſalem:* where his Name could not but be ſoon heard of, and whither He ſometimes went himſelf. And there was ſomething ſo peculiar in his Manner of Life, and his Preaching, which preſently became the Subject of Diſcourſe; that it drew the Attention of all People towards him: and They were induced by his Fame, and the Curioſity which That raiſed in them, to go out to Him, and hear what He taught, and what He pretended to. Our bleſſed *Lord*, on the contrary, when he diſplayed himſelf, and opened his Meſſage to Mankind, frequented the Places of greateſt Concourſe; and laid hold on all fair and good Opportunities of converſing with the World of *Sinners*. He choſe even to *eat and drink* with Them; and took their own Times, and attended their Leiſure, and their Invitations; and ſeemed rejoiced at every Occaſion of the moſt familiar Intercourſe with them.

And this different Conduct, We ſhall now ſee, was very ſuitable and agreeable to their

SERM XIV.

different Deſigns. The *Baptiſt's* great Buſineſs was to raiſe the Minds, and turn the Eyes, of the People of the *Jews*, towards the *Meſſiah*, who was now going to appear; to prepare them, by the *Baptiſm* and *Doctrine* of Repentance and Reformation, to underſtand the true Nature of his Kingdom, and to receive Him when he ſhould ſhew himſelf; to bear a Teſtimony to the true *Meſſiah*; and, after that was done, He himſelf *was to decreaſe*, and the other *was to increaſe:* as He expreſſes his own Senſe of his Office. Now, there is ſomething in that retired, and ſevere, Manner of Life He choſe, which is apt to raiſe the Curioſity and Attention of Men very much; and to put them upon aſking ſuch *Queſtions*, as may lead to the Knowledge of the moſt uſeful and important Truths.

And We ſee accordingly, that this Method of Living and Preaching, in which *John* the *Baptiſt* ſhewed himſelf, had ſuch an Influence upon the *Jews*, that Many were in doubt whether he was not Himſelf the *Meſſiah*, the promiſed Saviour of that Nation. It was ſo long, ſince ſo much Sanctity, and ſo much Contempt of the World, had been ſeen amongſt them, that, in their good and ſober Moods, They were induced to think, from ſuch Beginnings, that This might poſſibly be *He:*

though they quickly came to reject Him, when they found he ſpake of Nothing ſo much as of *Repentance, and bringing forth Fruits worthy of it.* But, after They had thus rejected Him, we find the moſt Artful and Deſigning amongſt Them were ſo embarraſſed between their own *Conduct* towards the *Baptiſt*, and their Fear of the *People*, that They did not know how to anſwer the *Queſtion* put to them by our *Lord*, whether the *Baptiſm* of *John* were of divine Original, or Not? For his Manner of Life, and Holineſs of Converſation, had gained him ſuch an *Authority* amongſt the *People*, that it would have incenſed *Them*, to have denied him to be a true *Prophet*; and, to have owned it, would have condemned Themſelves, for not receiving Him. SERM. XIV.

And as the Manner of his appearing, in that outward Garb, and inward Reality, of *Severity* and *Auſterity*, forcibly invited the Eyes and Attention of the Multitude to him; and engaged even the *worſt* Part of the *Jews* to ſend Meſſengers to him, to aſk him of the Character he bore, and the Deſign he came upon: So, likewiſe, it is worth obſerving, That, his chief Deſign being to bear Teſtimony to a greater *Prophet* than himſelf; and not to ingratiate himſelf ſo much with the People, as to gather Multitudes of Diſciples to

SERM. XIV.

his own Perſon; He could not have choſen a more proper Method of purſuing this, than that retired and auſtere Manner of Life. Had he made it his Buſineſs to have frequented all Places of Concourſe, and gathered to himſelf great Numbers of *Diſciples*, who were often Followers of the *Perſon*, more than of the *Doctrine*, of their Maſter; it might poſſibly have had an unhappy Effect with Relation to the *Meſſiah* himſelf, who was to preach Salvation to, and make Diſciples of, the whole *Nation*, as far as They would permit Him.

It muſt indeed be owned that, the greater the Number of *John's* Diſciples had been, the greater Influence it would have had upon the Cauſe of the *Meſſiah*, if All of them had cordially received their Maſter's Teſtimony concerning Him. But this, probably, would have been found too hard for *Practice*; as it carried with it unavoidably this Conſequence, That *Jeſus* was a *greater Prophet* than their Maſter, *John* the *Baptiſt*. For we ſee, there was always a Conteſt between the *Diſciples* of ſeveral *Maſters*; and a great Regret, and Envy, raiſed in every Sort, to ſee their own *Maſters* ſunk and depreſſed by the greater Glory of *Others*. And it is not improbable from the ſacred Story, that the few Diſciples *John* had, were leavened with this Sort of Temper; and that

that They could hardly have been perſuaded to believe any *Prophet* greater than their *Maſter*; or, with their whole Heart, receive the *Meſſiah*, who was now going to appear as Such. SERM. XIV.

Here therefore, was another Reaſon for the *Baptiſt's* Manner of Life; That his Buſineſs was, Not to conſult his own perſonal Intereſt, as a *Maſter* and a *Prophet*, ſo as to gather *Diſciples*, and Followers, to himſelf; but to be a living *Witneſs* to one *Greater* than Himſelf, and only to prepare Men's Hearts for the Reception of *Him*, and his Doctrine. And for this End, the Method which he choſe ſeems much more proper, than if He had mixed himſelf more with the World; and made it his Buſineſs to frequent the Places of popular Concourſe, and to ſhew Himſelf daily in the Commerce and Crowds of a great City: which might have appeared a Deſign of gaining Popularity, and Followers to Himſelf; rather than of ſerving the Honour and Intereſt of that Prince of Prophets, the *Meſſiah*, whoſe *Forerunner* only He was.

But the *Meſſiah* had another Part to act. His great Buſineſs was to gain Proſelytes and Diſciples to *Himſelf*, who could not adhere too cloſe to him. He could not be too *popular*, when once it was proper to open his Pretenſions, and reveal his true Character to

SERM. XIV.

the World. His great Design was to engage Mankind to Himself by all proper Methods: and of These, an easy and familiar Conversation, and a Compliance with their innocent Customs, was one of the most likely to win upon them.

Another *Consideration* is, That it was justly designed by GOD, and expected by the *Jews*, That the *Divinity* of *Christ's Mission* should be proved by wonderful Works in public; never performed, after such a Manner, and in such Number, before that Time: which being not the Case of *John* the *Baptist*, it was the less necessary for *Him* to affect the Society and Concourse of Men. And as the *Truth* of our *Lord's* Pretensions was to be demonstrated, and the Mouth of his Adversaries stopped, by a constant Series of these astonishing and divine Works; upon this Account, a more *public* Scene was the proper Scene of his Action: that He might not be said to have chosen the darkest Corners, and Places void of Witnesses, (which are thought proper Places to shew Tricks in,) and then to have weakly expected the World to believe in *Him*, for the Sake of what They never saw. The clearest Day-Light, and the greatest Multitudes, and even his *Adversaries* themselves, were to be the Spectators (though, to their own Shame, the envious and malicious

ous Spectators,) of the Proofs he had to give of his divine Authority. And therefore, it became him to purſue them, as it were, of his own Accord, with his wonderful Works; to appeal, every Day, to the Eyes and Ears of Thouſands, and to call in all the Witneſſes poſſible to the Teſtimony He had to give of Himſelf. For Truth, entirely void of all *Fraud*, doth not fear, but deſire, *Witneſſes*. Again,

John the *Baptiſt*, though a Perſon of extraordinary Holineſs of Life, without regard to that peculiar Character in which He appeared, was not deſigned to be propoſed to Mankind, as the great *Example*, for their Imitation: But the *Meſſiah* was to be that perfect *Example*, which all ſhould be obliged to copy after, with the Care and Attention of ſincere Followers. It became Him, therefore, to chooſe a Sphere of Action, and a Manner of Life, agreeable to the Tempers, and Neceſſities, and Buſineſs, of the *Generality* of Mankind; not ſuch a one, as ſuits with the Tempers, and Purpoſes, of a very ſmall and inconſiderable Number. Our *Saviour*, without Doubt, had as mean an Opinion of that Generation of Men, in which He appeared, as it was poſſible to have conceived from a perfect Knowledge of their Weakneſſes, and Follies; their Paſſions, and Vices. And, had he only had his own Inclination, without regard

SERM. XIV.

regard to the good of Others, to have consulted no Person could have relished the Pleasures of Solitude so well: because no Person was so fully sufficient to his own Entertainment and Happiness; or so little in want of Any of the Supports of human Society. But how, then, should he have *fulfilled all Righteousness?* Or, How could He have answered the End of his Appearing, to be made an *Example* to *Us*, who must converse, and deal, with one another: who must court and attend one another; and cannot, without our mutual Assistance, preserve the least order in the World; or answer the beneficial Ends of *Society*, in it?

But I have said enough on the *first* Head, *viz.* the *different* Behaviour of our blessed *Lord*, and *John* the *Baptist*, with Relation to human *Society*; and the Agreeableness of this their different Behaviour to their different Characters and Designs. And shall only add this one Caution; that what I have said is not to be understood as if, on the one hand, I thought that *John* the *Baptist* would not have been perfectly ready to a greater Correspondence with the World, had it been more for the Purpose of his Appearance, all Things considered; or, as if, on the other hand, I was not sensible that our Saviour had often shewn his Love to Retirement, especially

cially for *Prayer* to his Father: though it is obſervable, this was generally his Entertainment, when there was no Opportunity of converſing with Mankind; and of doing good to Any of Them by his divine Preſence and Diſcourſe. I come now,

II. To obſerve, what I propoſed in the next Place, *viz.* the groſs *Miſrepreſentation* put by the *Jews*, upon this different Conduct of our *Lord*, and *John* the *Baptiſt*. And that is plain in the *Text*. The *One* they cenſured, as a *Glutton* and a *Wine-bibber*, and a *Friend of Sinners*, becauſe he *ate and drank*, and entered into Company, after the uſual Manner of *Men*, in order to a more free and more beneficial Converſation with Them: And the *Other* they eſteemed little better than a mad Man, becauſe he ſeemed to fly from the reſt of the World; and lived not after the common Form, but affected ſomething very peculiar in his *Garb*, and in his *Diet*. So hard is it to pleaſe Thoſe who are reſolved not to be pleaſed. The *Leſſon* we may learn from hence is this, That Men are often very ready to entertain the moſt unjuſt Prejudices, rather than yield to the plaineſt Truths which contradict their beloved Notions or Practices. Had the *Jews* entertained the ſame Notions

of

SERM. XIV.

of the *Meſſiah*, and of the *Nature* of his *Kingdom*, that the *Baptiſt*, and our *Saviour*, both preached; They had ſhewn no ſuch Perverſeneſs and Prejudice, as now appears; and the *Two Prophets* had not met with ſo unjuſt and heavy Cenſures. Or, had the *Baptiſt* and our bleſſed *Lord* careſſed them in their beloved Notions of worldly Greatneſs and Majeſty, or their favorite Vices; and taught them Happineſs after their own abſurd falſe Scheme; One may venture to ſay, They had been extolled to the Skies, and Both received with open Arms. To ſuch a Pitch of *Prejudice* were the *Jews* come, that They could not bear to have their receïved *Opinions*, or *Practices*, condemned; and would not accept of an Happineſs, not to be obtained without relinquiſhing their old beloved Follies and *Vices*: When, in Truth, it ought to have been quite otherwiſe. For, if *John* the *Baptiſt* had preached any other *Meſſiah*, than one whoſe *Fan was in his Hand*, and who required the ſtricteſt Holineſs of Life; Or, if our bleſſed *Lord* had preached any other *Goſpel*, than the *Goſpel* of Holineſs, and Humility, and Love: the *Jews* might, juſtly, have charged the *One*, with the Madneſs of having a Commerce with evil Spirits; and the *Other*, with being a *Friend* to *Publicans*, and *Sinners*, in the worſt Senſe; a Lover of their Practices,

Practices, and an Encourager of their Vices. SERM. XIV.

It was this Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment of Life, that gave ſuch a Stop to the *Goſpel*, amongſt the *Jews*, at firſt. It is this that hinders the Increaſe of it, and that bars its Entrance to ſo many Ears, at this Day. The great Obſtruction, I ſay, to the *Goſpel*, is, that it will not reconcile Vice and Happineſs, a wicked Life and the Hopes of *Salvation*, together. Could it do this, plainly and effectually, how many Votaries ſhould we daily ſee flock in, and how many Encomiums ſhould We hear upon it? What *joyful Tidings* would it be accounted, and how glorious a *Salvation*, to the Sons of Men, wearied and affrighted with the Proſpect of the *Puniſhment*, but not with the *Practice*, of their Tranſgreſſions?

How obliging and courteous a Thing, therefore, is it, in the *Church* of *Rome*, to endeavour to make up this great Defect in the *Goſpel*; and, by the infallible Spirit it aſſumes, to ſupply this Want; and remove the only inſuperable Objection to wicked Minds againſt it? When we conſider the Workings of human Nature, we ſhall not much wonder that *Proſelytes* are gained, by teaching Men how to compound with GOD for the Breach of his Laws: Or, by

SERM. XIV.

by the dextrous Management of ſuch *Machines*, as *Indulgencies*, and *Abſolutions*. But when we conſider the *Reaſon* of the Thing itſelf, it is moſt aſtoniſhing that even the weakeſt of Men can be ſeduced by ſuch Pretenſes. For I truly think, That, of the *Two*, it is more eaſy, and more pardonable, to believe *Tranſubſtantiation* itſelf, than to believe that Almighty God would enter into any ſuch Covenant with Mankind, as ſhould encourage them to continue in their Sins; or give them the Liberty of tranſgreſſing the leaſt of thoſe Laws of eternal Reaſon, which are the Foundation of his own Glory, and of all the laſting Happineſs there is in the World.

In *moral Philoſophy*, This is as great an Abſurdity, as the other is in *Natural*; attended with as many *Difficulties*, and with much more intolerable Conſequences, relating to our Eternal Salvation. And, I am ſure, it is more excuſable to *err* in a Matter of Opinion; nay, though it may draw after it great Evils in the Worſhip of GOD, than in a Matter, which deſtroys the very Eſſence and Obligation of all *Morality*; confounding *Virtue* with *Vice*; making *Light*, *Darkneſs*, and *Darkneſs*, *Light*: and which is, indeed, calculated for the promoting of the whole Syſtem of *Immorality* in the World, as much, as if it had

had been deſigned for Nothing elſe. Our bleſſed *Lord* had no ſuch *Goſpel* to preach: and therefore, found no Reception amongſt Men of corrupt and profligate Minds; conſtant Purſuers of the Pleaſures, or, unwearied Sollicitors of the Glories and Honours, of this World. SERM. XIV.

Nay, could a Religion of ſuch Indulgence be ſuppoſed agreeable to the Will of GOD, I ſee no Need of a *Prophet* to be ſent into the World, on Purpoſe to teach, or inculcate, it. No fear, but that Mankind would learn this faſt enough, by the Influence of their own *bad Hearts*, and the Example of Others. From the *Beginning* of the World, great *Multitudes* had no *other Goſpel*, but This: and to the *End* of it, I doubt, great Multitudes will embrace no other; but live and dye in their *Sins*, expecting Mercy and Heaven, whilſt they have no Foundation for it within, nor Promiſe of it, from without.

For ourſelves; Let us learn, from this perverſe Temper of the *Jews*, how unbecoming it is, and how unreaſonable, to reject, or to neglect, any thing, not becauſe it is not agreeable to our own beſt Principles of Reaſon, but, becauſe it is contrary to our wicked Inclinations, and to our worldly Deſigns. It is manifeſt from the *Goſpel*, and from the Accounts of

SERM. XIV.

of thoſe Days, that the *Jews* ſet Themſelves to aſperſe both *John* the *Baptiſt* and our *Saviour*, and, at laſt, rejected Them, chiefly becauſe They were *Preachers* of the ſtricteſt *Holineſs* and *Virtue*. It was becauſe the *Baptiſt* was aſſiſting in *deſtroying the Works of the* Devil, that they ſaid he had a *Devil*. And it was becauſe our *Saviour* was *not* a *Friend* to *Sinners*, who continue ſuch, that they blaſphemed him as a *Friend to Sinners*, in the worſt Senſe. But let it not be ſaid that any of his own Followers, who are called by his Name, act, as if They partook, in any Meaſure, of the ſame Temper; and retained the ſame wicked Principles. I come now, in the laſt Place,

III. To ſay ſomething, in ſhort, concerning thoſe two Methods of living, now ſeen in the *Chriſtian* World; *That* of *Retirement* and *Auſterity*; and That of a more free and general Converſation: the *One*, ſometimes pretended to be copied after that of *John* the *Baptiſt*; and the *Other*, really copied after that of our bleſſed *Lord*.

It muſt be acknowledged to be very becoming the Character of a *reaſonable Creature*, placed in *this* State, to have a due Senſe of the

the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Enjoyments of this Life. And who would not be glad to retire from a World of Noiſe and Impertinence, of Ignorance and Folly, and, what is worſt of all, of Wickedneſs and Impiety? Who would not be glad, I ſay, to do this, in the moſt abſolute Senſe, that could ſupport himſelf in Solitude; were it not, that We have other Obligations to anſwer, and other Maxims to live by, than the following our own *Inclinations*, or *Humours?* The World is the *Stage* of *Action*, to a *Chriſtian:* and all the Members of that vaſt Body are his *Neighbours*; entitled to his Regard, as He is to Theirs. The Afflicted, the Deſolate, the Lame, the Blind, the Sick, the Weak, the Fatherleſs, the Widow, the Poor, the Needy, the Ignorant, and the Sinner, Theſe all, We know, called for our *Lord's* Aſſiſtance: and He thought it unbecoming *Him* to retire, when Any of theſe could be met with to receive the Influences of his Goodneſs. And the ſame Obligations belong to his *Followers*, by Right of *Deſcent*. They are the *Diſciples* of *Him*, who lived in the World to do good to All in it: and theſe diſtreſſed Objects are left by *Him* to *their* Care; and They are made the Patrons and Guardians of them, in his *Abſence*. Whenever a *retired Life* hinders not the Care, and Relief, and Support, of Theſe;

SERM. XIV.

nor breaks in upon any other moral Engagement; Or, any of the Duties ſtrictly owing to Human *Society*; it cannot be ſaid to be unworthy of a Man, or a *Chriſtian*. And accordingly, our *Lord*, we ſee, freely mixed himſelf in *Society*, in order to the Benefit of the World about Him, as long as the *Light* permitted Him: and when *Darkneſs* came on, often laid hold on the Opportunities of what may be called a *Religious Retirement* from it. And generally ſpeaking, *Chriſtians*, in their due Meaſure, can imitate him in *both* theſe *Caſes*. But They, who cannot follow him, in *Both*, are ſtrictly obliged to take eſpecial Care not to neglect the *Former*. This was his peculiar Delight; to converſe, with Eaſe and Humanity, amongſt Men, becauſe, without This, no Inſtance of Charity could reach Them: and This was what he peculiarly recommended to his *Followers*, as the Duty They owed to their *Fellow-Creatures*. Every Man may find Opportunities of Retirement, ſufficient to ſecure the Bleſſing of Heaven, and the Favour of God, by *Prayer*: and every good *Man* will make Uſe of them. And if He be always diſpoſed to lay hold on every Occaſion of doing Good in human Society, according to his Abilities; He will by Theſe Two Inſtances of Practice, ſhew Himſelf

ſelf the true Diſciple of that *Maſter*, who went before Him, in Both.

But to make *Retirement*, an *Art*, or a *Burthen*; to build Houſes of Entertainment to entice Men into it; to frame arbitrary Rules of Severity for it; to guard it with rigid Vows, too probably, drawing bitter *Repentance* and *Sorrow*, after them; and to clothe it with ſuch Appearances of Something extraordinary, and above the common pitch of Devotion, as may enſnare unguarded and unexperienced Minds into what may prove the great Unhappineſs of their whole Lives: Nay, to court it merely on *our own* Account, in order to lead an idle and uſeleſs Life; or to be at Leiſure, perhaps, not for the Study of God's Will, as delivered to Us by himſelf, but only for the Improvement of our own peculiar Whimſies: This is, undoubtedly, unworthy of the Grand *Deſign* of the *Chriſtian Religion*; and was not only never commanded, but never intimated, by the firſt Preacher of it, and his immediate Succeſſors, as far as we have any Knowledge of them.

That this is not copied after the *Life* of our bleſſed Saviour, All will allow, who read the Hiſtory of it; and find Him daily and hourly, converſing with All that came in his Way, in the Streets and

SERM. XIV.

Houſes of *Jeruſalem*, and the neighbouring Towns. Nor can it be called the *Life* of *John* the *Baptiſt*; or the leaſt Imitation of it: becauſe it is moſt evident that He retired, not to pleaſe his own *Phanſy*; but to anſwer the End of his Office; and dwelt in the *Deſert*, not in order to avoid the *World* entirely, but to entice and invite All within his Reach to hear his Doctrine of *Repentance*, and of the *Kingdom of God*, then at hand. And, as far as We know the Nature of this *Kingdom*, or *Goſpel*, of *Chriſt*, We may *retire*, as much as *That* requires of us, in the Midſt of the moſt *populous* City; and without throwing off the leaſt Part of our neceſſary Buſineſs, or innocent Converſation: Nay, I may ſay, We may do this much more agreeably to the Nature and End of that *Goſpel*, than if we were ſhut up, within Walls, from the Sight of Men, and employed our whole Time, in performing, by Night and by Day, the moſt regular Round of *Offices*, under the ſpecious Title of Devotion.

In a word, the Way of Life, with regard to human Society, in this World, recommended to Us by our Maſter, is the *Life* of ſuch *Beneficence*, as ſuppoſes Us converſing, and acting a Part, in the *Society* around Us; and this cannot be, a *Recluſe* Life of *Inaction*, but implies in it the very contrary. *This* is that Behaviour

Behaviour and Conduct of ourſelves in the *Social* World, according to the ſeveral Stations aſſigned Us in it, which the *Precepts* of our charitable Religion declare to be our Duty. This is what the *Example* of our great *Maſter* directs Us to: And, this will be our Reward and our Crown to all Eternity. If we can perfect Ourſelves in *this*; We may ſecurely leave to *Others* the Happineſs, and the Glory, of any uſeleſs and idle *Retirement*, which They may pleaſe to miſcall by the Name of *Religion*; but which has not the leaſt Tincture of the *Religion* of *Chriſt:* And may well content ourſelves with following, as near as we can, the *Footſteps* and *Rules* of our common *Maſter*, rather than the ſilly and fruitleſs *Inventions* of Thoſe, who, under the Cover of his ſacred Name, have almoſt extinguiſhed the Knowledge of the *main End* of his appearing amongſt Men. And this Regard to our *Lord* himſelf, above All other Directors, I hope, We ſhall all reſolve to ſhew, in the whole Conduct of our *Lives* here below.

The EXTREMES *of* RICHES *and* POVERTY.

SERMON XV.

PROVERBS XXX. 8, 9.

Give me neither Poverty, *nor* Riches; *feed me with Food convenient for me. Left I be full, and deny* Thee, *and say, Who is the Lord? Or, left I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my* GOD *in vain.*

I Shall not enter into any Enquiry concerning the *Perſon* to whom the Words in this *Chapter* are aſcribed. The only Queſtion of Importance is, whether this be not a Wiſh, or Prayer, worthy of a wiſe and conſidering Man; founded upon Reaſon, and a careful Obſervation of the Inconveniences, and Conveniences, attending the ſeveral States of Life in this World. If it can be proved to be a reaſonable, and well-grounded *Prayer*; we ought all to join in it, whoever were the firſt Author of it. And, on the

SERM. XV.

SERM. XV.

other hand, if it ſhall, after Examination, appear to be contrary to *Reaſon*, and judicious Obſervation; it can be of no Importance, to find out, if we could, Who was the Perſon that made this Wiſh, here recorded.

Now, in order to our judging rightly, in the Caſe before Us, it is proper to obſerve that the *Prayer* in the *Text* is plainly founded upon *This*; *viz.* that the Hazards, and Inconveniences, attending the *two Extremes* of boundleſs *Riches*, and the loweſt *Poverty*, are ſo great, and ſo generally fatal to thoſe who experience either of thoſe two States; that, if a wiſe Man were to chooſe for himſelf, with regard to true Happineſs, and the Intereſt of Virtue and Religion, He would certainly chooſe the middle Condition: Or, ſuch a *Competency*, and convenient Subſiſtence, as ſhould ſet him above the Need of Relief from the Bounty of Others; and enable him to provide tolerably for Thoſe in whom He is moſt nearly concerned. And as the Proof of the Parts of this *Propoſition* will ſufficiently vindicate, and eſtabliſh, the Wiſdom of this *Prayer*, which is built upon it; I ſhall, therefore, make the *Propoſition* now mentioned the Subject of my following Diſcourſe.

And here, as to the *one* Part of this Propoſition, and this Prayer, *viz.* That which relates

lates to *Poverty*; there is ſomething in *this* ſo diſagreeable, and ſo diſtaſteful, to the Bent and Inclination of human Nature; ſomething ſo contemptible and mean, in the outward Appearance of it, which ſtrikes more upon Men than the unſeen and hidden Part of any Condition; that there is not One in the World, perhaps, of Thoſe who may be eſteemed in their right Mind, who would voluntarily chooſe the loweſt and meaneſt Condition of human Life. There always was, and always will be, a general Concurrence and Conſent in this Part of the Prayer, *Give me not Poverty:* not, perhaps, for fear of ſinning againſt GOD, in that Condition, which is the Conſideration alledged in the Text; but for fear only of that Contempt and Ignominy, and thoſe Neceſſities, and worldly Inconveniences, which are annexed to that State.

On the other Side, there is, and always was, and always will be, almoſt as general a Conſent againſt the *other* Part of this Prayer, which relates to immenſe and exceſſive *Riches*. There is ſomething in the outward Appearance and Figure of that Greatneſs and Superiority which often attend upon vaſt *Riches*; ſomething in the uncommon Conveniences, and Pleaſures, They are ſuppoſed to procure; Something which captivates the Minds of

SERM. XV.

moſt Men, to ſuch a Degree, that They can hardly know how to chooſe the *beſt* State, againſt their own worldly Intereſt; or, not to wiſh *Themſelves* in that diſtinguiſhed *Condition* of Life, which They are ſo apt to envy, and admire, in *Others*. And, generally ſpeaking, *He* that ſhould go about to perſuade any Man to beſeech GOD earneſtly *not* to grant Him the Abundance of *Riches*, would, I fear, be looked upon, in almoſt the ſame ridiculous Light, as He would be, who ſhould teach Him to pray expreſſly *for* the *Extreme* of *Poverty*, and Want.

This being ſo, That Men are very ready to pray ardently againſt *Poverty*, and a low Fortune, upon mean and worldly Conſiderations; and as ardently to wiſh for the greateſt Riches, without a due Regard to the natural Conſequences of ſuch a Wiſh: It is, therefore, of Importance to endeavour to ſhew, on one hand, that there are *Conſiderations*, of a better Sort, ſufficient to make a *wiſe* Man pray againſt the loweſt Condition of this Life; that ſo, our natural Abhorrence of extreme *Poverty* may be ſettled upon a right Foundation, and improved into a Virtue: And, on the other hand, ſtill more neceſſary, and of greater Importance, to ſhew that there are *Reaſons* ſufficient to remove the Bent of a wiſe Man's

Man's Thoughts from all anxious and importunate Desires after the Abundance and Extremity of *Riches*; that so, we may not fatally err, on that Part, on which there is most Danger, from the apparent Tendency of human Nature. Thus shall we be led to fix our Wishes, with respect to this World, in their due Centre, on the middle Condition, rightly tempered between the two Extremes. In order, therefore, to shew the Wisdom and Reasonableness of this *Prayer* in the *Text*, I propose these following Particulars: SERM. XV.

I. To consider the fatal Inconveniences and evil Consequences, with respect to lasting Happiness and Religion, naturally attending the Extreme of Wealth, and the Abundance of *Riches*, in this World.

II. To consider, on the other hand, the Inconveniences, with respect to Virtue and Religion, generally seen to attend the lowest Condition of Life, and the Extreme of *Poverty*.

III. To inferr, from what I shall have said, the Reasonableness of desiring the middle Condition, called in the Text, *Food convenient for Us*; and the greater Likelihood of obtaining *Happiness*, and securing and improving our *Virtue* and Religion, in this Estate. This will be

SERM. XV.

be a ſufficient Vindication of the *Wiſdom* of the *Prayer* now before us. And,

IV. After I have ſaid what may be proper upon theſe Heads, I ſhall be led to anſwer ſome *Queſtions* of Importance, which may offer themſelves upon this Subject.

I. In order to ſhew the Wiſdom and Reaſonableneſs of the *Prayer* in the *Text*, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent to you the many fatal Inconveniences and evil Conſequences, with reſpect to *Happineſs* and *Religion*, which naturally attend the Super-abundance of *Riches* in this World.

And here, if I ſhould attempt to ſpeak of all the Sorts of Folly, and *Madneſs*, truly ſo called; and all the *Vices*, to which the Overflowings of *Riches* incline, and naturally lead, frail weak Mortals; of the Vanity, the Pride, the Haughtineſs, the Contempt of their Fellow-Creatures, which appear in *Some*; the hard-hearted, ſelfiſh, Sordidneſs, of *Others*; the Luxury, the Idleneſs, the Profuſion, the Intemperance, the immoderate Purſuit of worldly *Pleaſures*, to which Many more, by the Guidance of *Riches*, have given themſelves up: *the Time would fail Me.* Nor would this be merely a *Declamation*, or a *Satire*, founded

on

on the Ill-nature and Envy of Thoſe below this Condition; but a Matter of Fact, too much confirmed by the Obſervation, and Experience, of many paſt Ages: and ſeen, at this Day, to be ſtill ſo generally *true*, that We ſeldom hear of an *Exception*. SERM. XV.

And this *Evil* is never more remarkable than in the Conduct of Thoſe, who have ſhewn a good and virtuous Conduct in a *lower* Sphere, but have not been able to withſtand the Shock of a larger and more exalted Fortune; or, to be Proof againſt the Attacks of a ſudden and extraordinary Proſperity. How often, upon ſuch Occaſions, may We juſtly ſay, has the Increaſe of *Riches* been the Beginning of all moral Folly, or the Increaſe of all moral Evil? How often has the Addition to the outward good Eſtate of a Man, proved a ſenſible Diminution of the inward good Eſtate of his Soul; and the Improvement of his *Fortune*, the Improvement of every evil Diſpoſition of his *Mind?* Where Quiet and Contentment have been known to dwell, in a very great Degree; there, when *Riches* have entered, *Diſcontent*, and *Uneaſineſs*, have entered with them. Where Friendſhip, and mutual Confidence, have flouriſhed: there Enmity, and mutual Animoſities, have taken Place. Inſtead of former Repoſe and Tranquillity,

SERM. XV.

quillity, Quarrels and Law-ſuits, Care and Anxiety, have been ſeen. Inſtead of Love and Amity, Diſguſt and Jealouſy; inſtead of Serenity and Calmneſs, a wrinkled Brow and an uneaſy Countenance; inſtead of Affability and Courteſy, Haughtineſs and Contempt of Others, have taken Place.

Thus Vice, in ſeveral Forms, has often triumphed over the moſt amiable Virtues, by the Help of *Riches:* and thus have the trueſt *Enjoyments*, in human Life, been totally ruined and laid waſte by Them. They are pretended ſometimes to be ſought after, to *ſatisfy* Men's Deſires, and to *extinguiſh* Covetouſneſs; and They only encreaſe thoſe Deſires, and add Fuel to the *Fire* within. They are really deſigned perhaps, by Some, to be made uſe of, for the Happineſs of Others who want them: but they are ſeen to make Men more hard-hearted, than they were before, and leſs inclined to *Beneficence* and Good-nature. What numberleſs Temptations, of all Kinds, and theſe irreſiſtible without the greateſt Guard upon their Minds, doth the *Exceſs* of Riches adminiſter to Men? All indeed do not fall by them: but all are in the extremeſt Danger. There are Exceptions: Otherwiſe, the World would be a Scene of *wicked Confuſion* between *Covetouſneſs*, and *Pride:* And

And happy *They*, who make the Exceptions! But, comparatively ſpeaking, how *Few* are *Thoſe*, who have Strength of Soul enough to know the only reaſonable and noble Uſe of that Diſtinction from their *Fellow-Creatures*, which *Riches* create? Or, in the Words of the *Text*, how *Few*, who are *full*; and do not, ſome way or other, in their *Practice*, if not in *Words*, *deny* God, and *ſay*, *Who is the Lord?* So great is the Danger, that immenſe *Riches* may draw off the Mind from all due regard to *Virtue* and *Religion*; and expoſe it to be fatally led away into ſuch a State, as is inconſiſtent with laſting Happineſs here, or hereafter; and is, indeed, the Reverſe to all that a Wiſe Man would wiſh for.

It is impoſſible to ſay all that might be properly urged upon this Subject. But, Whoever ſeriouſly thinks upon ſuch Obſervations as have been now mentioned; and conſults his own Knowledge, or Experience; will find *Reaſon* enough not to deſire, or pray for, ſuch a *Condition*, as *That* by which ſo many have been ruined; and in which He himſelf is ſure of meeting with the moſt hazardous Trials, and all thoſe Temptations which are moſt likely to prove fatal to his own Greateſt and Trueſt Intereſt.

SERM. XV.

II. Upon the next Head, *viz.* the *Inconveniences* generally ſeen to attend the *loweſt* Condition of Life, I need not ſpend many Words: but muſt ſay ſomething; That we may not avoid it, or pray againſt it, merely for worldly Reaſons, becauſe it is a Condition of Life irkſome and diſagreeable to Fleſh and Blood; but upon better and worthier Conſiderations; leſt we ſhould fall into *Sin*, by the *Temptations* peculiar to it. For this is the Reaſon in the *Text*, upon which the Part of the Prayer relating to *Poverty*, is founded.

But here it cannot be improper, before I mention the Vices *peculiar* to this State, to obſerve, that, notwithſtanding the wide Diſtance and Difference of the *two Extremes*, there are great Sins common to Both: I mean that the *Loweſt* of Men are ſeen to *practiſe* Many of the *ſame Vices*, which their *Superiors* ſometimes do: as if They ſtrove to reſemble the *Richeſt*, at leaſt, in their *Wickedneſs*; and to ſhew Themſelves exactly like Them, in the Worſt of their Features. The ſame *Profaneneſs* and *Defiance* of God; the ſame *Lewdneſs* and *Debauchery*; the ſame *Oaths* and *Execrations*; the ſame *Intemperance* and *Drunkenneſs*, when Opportunity, or the Bounty of the *Rich*, gives leave; nay, the ſame Inſenſibility, and Diſregard to the Happineſs

pineſs of the World about Them, are found amongſt the very *pooreſt* of all Men: The *Same*, I ſay, which are ſeen ſometimes to accompany the *Riches* of *Others*. SERM. XV.

There is *One* only trifling Difference, That the ſame Vices are practiſed, by *one* Sort, in a coarſer and more ſordid Manner, which are practiſed, by the *Other*, (perhaps not always,) in a more refined and delicate Way. *This* methinks, ought to ſhock Thoſe of ſuperior Rank; and, when They ſee that *Beggars* themſelves can riſe to the ſame Pitch of *Immorality*, muſt move Them, even from the *Pride* of keeping up their ſo much boaſted Diſtinction, to abhor thoſe Vices, in which the *Pooreſt* can equal, if not excel, Them.

But we muſt now add, that there are *Vices* peculiar to this *loweſt* Condition. The *Tricks* and *Lies*; the *Forgeries*, and *Thefts*; the falſe *Teſtimonies*, and *Perjuries*; the *Violences*, and even *Murthers*, which the *Pooreſt* are, ſorely and often, tempted to be guilty of, in order to ſupport themſelves in Life, as they pretend, are hardly to be enumerated. *Here*, likewiſe, there are *Exceptions*; and *Some* may be found, who preſerve a Senſe of GOD, and Religion, amidſt the Preſſures of the narroweſt and moſt diſtreſſed Circumſtances. But ſtill the true

SERM. XV.

and juſt Reaſons why a *Chriſtian* ſhould pray againſt this State, are, Becauſe he knows not what the extremeſt Neceſſity may reduce him to; and how little Strength he may find himſelf to have, upon Trial, againſt ſuch Temptations, as extreme *Poverty* may expoſe him to.

If theſe *Crimes*, now charged upon the *Pooreſt* of Men, were in ſuch Senſe the *Works of Darkneſs*, as not to be known, or ſeen, but only ſuſpected; This Accuſation might be deemed only an *Addition* of *Affliction* to their diſtreſsful State. But, who does not know and lament this Scene of Wickedneſs amongſt *Them?* And if more Notice were taken of it, it would be much happier both for *Themſelves*, and their Neighbours. They would have leſs Encouragement to make ſo deteſtable a Figure in their low Eſtate; and human Society, leſs to fear from their *evil* Practiſes; and the better Sort of them more Supports for their Patience and Humility, under their Calamities.

Having thus ſet before you the *Inconveniences*, with reſpect to *Virtue* and Religion, which are too generally ſeen to attend upon the two *Extreme Conditions* of *Life*, in this World; what I have already ſaid will naturally lead our Thoughts to what I propoſed, in the next place, *viz.*

III. To

III. To ſhew the Happineſs of the *middle Condition*; that State of *Life*, which is removed from the Trials and Hazards, attending the Superfluity of *Riches*; or the *Extremity* of *Poverty*: and bleſſed with Conveniences enough to place the Man out of the Reach of thoſe *Evils*, to which Exceſs and Abundance, on one hand, and Penury and Want, on the other, are ſeen to expoſe Men. We are all weak and imperfect Creatures; too eaſily impoſed upon, and miſled, by the ſpecious Outſide of Things; or too eaſily driven, by the Senſe of Pain and Want, into the Paths of Error and Sin. Therefore, the beſt Condition is That which has moſt Security in it. And *that* has moſt Security in it, which has feweſt Temptations to Vice, and leaſt Difficulty to ſurmount. And the Extremes of Fortune, in this State, being the moſt hazardous to *Virtue* and *Religion*; the *middle Condition* between the two Extremes, muſt, conſequently, be what a Wiſe Man would chooſe, all Things conſidered: unleſs he could know the certain Event of Things, which in their own Nature are uncertain, and depend upon the voluntary Choice of free Agents. For it may be truly ſaid of this *middle* State, That it doth not, by its natural Tendency, ſo much endanger Virtue, as either

SERM. XV.

ther of the Two Extremes, of *Riches*, or *Poverty:* not so much, on one hand, inclining the Man to *deny God, and say, Who is the Lord?* or, on the other hand, to *steal and take the Name of God in vain*, as it is expressed in the *Text*.

It must be granted, that *many* are the *Vices* of that *Multitude* of Men, placed in this *middle* Condition: the more inexcusable is their *Guilt* and *Folly*. But what would the same Men have been, in greater Abundance, or greater Narrowness, of Fortune? Much worse, it is to be feared. If the lesser Temptations they meet with, are able to draw them into so pernicious Courses; what would those greater, which they must have experienced in other States, have done? But I will not multiply Words. I hope, I have said enough to lead you to see, and acknowledge, the Wisdom and Reasonableness of the *Prayer*, in the *Text*, *Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me.*

IV. The Time will now only permit me to consider some *Questions* that may arise upon what I have been recommending to your Thoughts: which was the next Thing I proposed to do.

1. It

SERM. XV.

1. It may ſtill, without Impropriety, be aſked, in return to all that has been ſaid, whether *Riches*, even the Abundance of Them, are not a very great Advantage to *Men* in this State, in many Reſpects: and, therefore, whether, notwithſtanding the *evil Uſe* that has been made of them by Many, and the *evil Practices* They naturally lead to, They may not be deſired by *Wiſe* and *Good* Men. The true *Anſwer* to ſuch a *Queſtion*, I think, is this, That there can be no Reaſons ſufficient to move a conſidering Perſon to make it the uneaſy Care and Buſineſs of his Life to obtain any *Riches* beyond what are neceſſary and convenient for his own well-being, and for the Support of thoſe whom the Providence of God has nearly allied to him; becauſe it is far from being certain that He ſhall not be tempted to make a bad Uſe of them, as ſo many of his Fellow-Creatures have done before him. The Exceſs of *Riches* can be found an Advantage to no Man, 'till the final Event has ſhewn, that He has actually made a noble and Godlike Uſe of them, for the Benefit and Advantage of the World about him. *We* are apt to think, perhaps, that We ſhould make ſuch a Uſe of them: And it may be ſo. But we cannot certainly promiſe this to Ourſelves. We may fall by the ſame Snares that have entangled ſo many before Us: and We know not the full Power of a *Temptation*, 'till

SERM. XV.

we have tried it. And therefore, I cannot think that it would become us to make it the great Object of our Wiſhes, or our Labours, to be *Rich* above what the Neceſſities and Conveniences, proper for our Stations, require. And if we walk by this Rule, it is moſt likely, that what the *Providence* of GOD ſends beyond this, may prove a *Bleſſing*; and not a *Curſe*, as it often hath proved, when Men have ſolicited Heaven and Earth, as it were, for it, and ſpent their Nights and Days in the Purſuit of it. The only Advantage that the Superfluity of Riches gives to any one is, that it opens a larger Field to his Generoſity and Beneficence; that it makes his Charity conſpicuous, and his Humility lovely; and adds a Beauty to all his Virtues. But who can tell that He ſhall certainly be the happy Man, of Virtue and Faith enough, to *poſſeſs this World, as though he poſſeſſed it not; and to uſe it, as not abuſing it?* We cannot indeeed, avoid rejoicing in any of the *Good Things* of this World, which are granted Us. But, if we be *Chriſtians*, we cannot rejoice in them any farther, than as we are reſolved to dedicate them to the Glory of Him who gives them to Us; to the Purpoſes He recommends to Us; and to the Happineſs of the reſt of our Fellow-Creatures.

2. Another

2. Another *Queſtion* may ariſe in the Minds of Some, concerning the other Extreme of *Poverty*; whether it be not often repreſented, and even in the *Holy Scriptures*, as a Sort of a Bleſſed State, and a Title, as it were, to the Favor of God; and the Rewards of Heaven; and therefore, be not truly worthy of a wiſe Man's Choice? But this again can be judged of, only by the Event. If Perſons behave themſelves in that Condition, with a conſtant Regard to Virtue and Religion; with a noble Courage and Patience; and with a due Submiſſion to the Providence of GOD; there is no doubt, it opens a Door to much greater Degrees of Happineſs to come. But it is not the Part of a *wiſe Man* to venture *eternal Happineſs* upon what may *poſſibly* improve Him; but rather to wiſh for what is leaſt liable to Temptations, and leaſt hazardous to his Virtue, in this State of Probation. When we are placed by our great *Governour* in a dangerous Poſt; our Buſineſs is to maintain it nobly and courageouſly: but it is *Preſumption*, and not *Duty*, to deſire and court unneceſſary Hazards. We ſeldom come off without the Loſs of Honour, from *Dangers* of our own chooſing: and therefore, our Lord himſelf teaches us to pray, *Lead us not into Temptation.* So that, though the *Extremes* of human Life,

SERM. XV.

Life, on both Hands, may prove honourable and glorious to Thoſe who can bear them with due Temper, and reſiſt all the Temptations which They adminiſter; yet no one, who thinks what human Nature, at preſent, is, would either *labour*, or *pray*, himſelf into a Condition, which Multitudes of Examples before his Eyes may make him fear, He ſhall not go through, without ſome conſiderable Loſs, or Wound, to his *Virtue*, and *Religion*.

3. If you now aſk, what is that *Prayer*, in Relation to the Things of this World, which it becomes You to put up to the ſupreme Governour of all Things; I anſwer, that the Wiſdom of the Prayer in the Text is recommended to You, tho' not made an abſolute Duty. This will ſhew You that You may, with blameleſs Hearts, and in expreſs Words, pray againſt the hazardous *Extremes* of ſuperfluous *Riches*, and the loweſt *Poverty*: and that when you ſo pray, out of regard to the greater Security of your moral Practice; leſt the *Trials* in thoſe two *Extremes* ſhould be too powerful for You; You are ſure, You act according to Duty, by making the Conſiderations of *Religion* the Ground of your *Prayer*.

If You would not be outdone, or put to Shame, even by the *Heathens*, let One of the wiſeſt that

that ever appeared amongſt them, lead your Thoughts to a Prayer, a little more general, but near a-kin to that in the Text. You may learn it from One of his *Scholars*, who, in his Addreſs to GOD, requeſted the ſupreme Being to *grant* Him whatever was *truly Good* for Him, though He ſhould be ſo blind himſelf, as *not* to aſk it: and to *deny* Him whatever was not really ſo, but hurtful, though He himſelf ſhould be ſo ill-inſtructed, or weak, as to beg it of Him earneſtly and importunately: or to this Effect.

But if You would act in this *Caſe*, as *Chriſtians*, which your Duty requires of You; You muſt ſtrictly obſerve that moſt *reaſonable* Form of *Prayer*, which your *great Maſter* dictated to his *Diſciples*. In this, He effectually teaches You *not* to pray for Superfluity of *Riches*, unbounded *Poſſeſſions*, numerous *Servants*, ſplendid *Equipages*, or the like: but allows You, (I may ſay, *commands* You) to ſhew your Dependence upon the ſupreme Being, by *praying*, *in expreſs Words*, for Your *daily Bread* only; leaving all the reſt to Providence, and your own careful Endeavours, within the Bounds of his Holy Religion. This Direction of our *Bleſſed Lord* is an infallible Guide to all his Followers, upon this Subject.

4. Laſtly,

SERM. XV.

4. Laſtly, if You ſhould aſk, what is that exact *Competence*, which You are ſtill permitted to deſire, and ſeek after; I muſt anſwer, not only That it is beyond *my* Power to fix it; but that I believe it impoſſible for Any One to ſettle *That* preciſely, by *one* Meaſure, which requires *Many*, according to the ſeveral Stations of Life, allotted to the ſeveral Inhabitants of our World. To ſay, It *is always Something more than a Man has already*, is the Voice of *inſatiable Avarice*; witty perhaps, but ſporting itſelf upon a moſt ſerious Subject.

There is *One* Way, I think, of coming near to the Truth; unleſs it be quite ſtopped up by the Reſolution of Men to *deceive their own Souls*. It is certain, that Almighty GOD cannot be ſo rigorous, as to make any Man's *Salvation* depend upon a mere Nicety, in which the moſt honeſt Mind may be miſtaken. And it is as certain that He will not be *mocked*, or put off, with the poor Excuſes of Many, who have it in their Power to know their *Duty*, and their *Happineſs*. All Men, who will conſider, may know well enough, what Manner of Life is required of them, in *Decency*, and Compliance with *Cuſtom*, according to that Station, and that Rank, in which they are placed. And by the Maintenance of *This*, without *Injuſtice*, or *Intemperance*,

perance, it is evident, They do not ſin; Nay, that They contribute to the good Subſiſtence of many honeſt and induſtrious Perſons in the World. They may alſo know, if they have a Mind to it, who They are, whom, in Conſcience, they are obliged to provide for; and what is ſufficient to place them in a proper Station, in the World; the moſt likely to prove happy to Them, at the End. And They all muſt be ſenſible that, when Theſe *two* Points are tolerably ſecured, What is over and above, is then uſed, and improved, with Glory and Honour, when it is made a Fund for *Charity*, and *Beneficence*. If Men will ſtudy all Evaſions to flatter, and impoſe upon, Themſelves; Who can help it? But if They will deal ſincerely and honeſtly by Themſelves, in this Point, there is no need of a *Prophet*, to ſay to Any *One* of Them who are concerned, *Thou art the Man*. Every One will ſay it to himſelf. And this is all that can be done, by Us, in a Caſe of this Sort; to apply ſtrongly to Themſelves, and to leave it upon their Conſciences, as they will anſwer it at the ſolemn Day of Account, whether They do not inwardly know that They are happy in that *Competency*, and good Eſtate, which a Wiſe Man ought to wiſh for. This therefore, is juſtly left to their own *Determination*.

SERM. XV.

To

SERM. XV.

To conclude, Let us all, in the Sincerity of our Hearts, make the beſt Uſe We can, for our own Happineſs, and the Good of Others, of what has been ſaid; and ſhew a *Conduct*, worthy of *Men* and of *Chriſtians*, in that Condition of Life, whatever it may be, in which our Great and Good Governour ſhall think fit to place Us.

The

The GOOD SAMARITAN.

SERMON XVI.

LUKE X. 37.

Then said Jesus *unto Him, Go, and do Thou likewise.*

WHETHER the Verses before this contain a *Parable*, invented for Instruction; or a real Matter of *Fact*; it imports little. The *Words* I have read to You, are a *Lesson* drawn from the foregoing Story: The Occasion of which was this. A certain *Lawyer*, one who studied the *Law* of *Moses*, and exercised himself in all the *Questions* belonging to that *Law*, having heard that our blessed *Lord* professed to shew a sure and infallible Way to *Life* and Happiness, came to him to try what Answer he would give to that important Question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* Our Lord's Answer was short and plain; *viz.* that the *Summ* of all that Religion

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

ligion, which can make us acceptable to God, is to *love God above all Things, and our Neighbour as Ourselves.* The *Lawyer* seems here not to be at all concerned about the *Former*; not doubting, perhaps, but that he had always sufficiently demonstrated his *Love to God*, by his strict Observance of all the *Ceremonies* of the *Mosaical Law.* And, hoping to justify himself in the Matter of *Love to his Neighbour* also, desires to know of *Jesus*, Who that *Neighbour is*, whom he is thus to *love* as *Himself.*

Here We must observe, that, at this Time, the *Jews* were in Nothing more corrupted, than in their Notions about the Persons, on whom they were to bestow any Tokens of *Good-will.* They had, in a Manner, forgot that strict Bond of *Nature*, by which all Men are allied to one another: and all the World took Notice how stiff and narrow in their Regards to Others; and how void of all *Charity*, They were grown. They were come to that pass, that they denied the common Civilities, and the common Conveniences of human Life, to Strangers, and Persons of other Religions. We are told by some, that they would not shew them so much as the Way to any Place they were going to; or direct them to a Fountain where they might quench their Thirst.

Here,

Here therefore, our *Bleſſed Lord* had a good Opportunity of oppoſing this narrow and inhumane Spirit that was gone out amongſt them: And We may be ſure, He was glad to lay hold on it; as he came into the World to implant other Sort of Notions in the Minds of Men, and to make their Charity as like to that of *Almighty God* himſelf, as it could be. In anſwer, therefore, to this *Enquiry*, and to teach Him who made it, *Whom* He was to look upon as his *Neighbour*; as an Object of that *Love*, he was ſpeaking of; and in order to do this in the moſt moving and affecting Manner, he ſets his Duty plainly before his Eyes in a *Story*, here related.

A certain Man, He does not ſay, whether a *Jew*, or a *Stranger*. If a *Jew*, the good Nature of the *Samaritan*, preſently ſpoken of, was ſo much the more remarkable; there being a conſummate *Hatred* betwixt the *Two Nations*: If a *Stranger*, the Compaſſion of the *Samaritan* was peculiarly fit to be recommended to the Imitation of the *Jew*; in order to teach Him that univerſal Benevolence, from which He was utterly alienated. This Man, *in a Journey from Jeruſalem to Jericho, fell amongſt Thieves, who robbed him*, and uſed him ſo ill, that he was left *half dead*. Such an Object, lying helpleſs, and in a moſt inconvenient

SERM. XVI.

Place, one would have thought enough to move the Compaſſion of the greateſt *Barbarians*. And yet we find Compaſſion ſunk ſo low amongſt the *Jews*, that our *Saviour* thought their *Behaviour* in ſuch Caſes fitly repreſented by what follows. A *Prieſt*, and a *Levite*, Perſons peculiarly employed in the Service of GOD, and devoted to the external Offices of their *Religion*, had forgot *Humanity* ſo far, as not to be touched with the Sight. The *One ſaw him*, at a Diſtance, as appears; the *Other* came, and looked on him: but *Both* of them *paſſed by on the other Side*. What Pretenſes they had for this Neglect, our *Lord* does not ſay. Perhaps, They were in Haſte, upon Buſineſs; or going to attend upon the *Sacrifices*, or other Offices of the *Temple*; not underſtanding, nor feeling, the *Force* of that God-like Saying, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. Or, perhaps, They found him to be a *Stranger*, a *Heathen*; and ſo fit rather for their Averſion, than their *Pity*. Something, or other, They had to lay their Conſciences aſleep: and were, without Doubt, glad of any Excuſe, or Evaſion, to that Purpoſe.

Let us ſee what follows. *But* a *certain Samaritan*, *One* of that *Nation* which mixed *Idolatry* with the Service of GOD; which *worſhiped they knew not* what; of that *Nation* which was hated and deſpiſed by

by the *Jews*, to such a Degree that They had no Dealings with Them; a *Samaritan*, when he saw this miserable Object, was *moved with Compassion*; shewed him all the Love imaginable; performed all the good Offices that his present Condition could demand of him; and administred every Thing that his Necessity required. The *Cruelty*, and unbecoming *Barbarity*, of Those who neglected Him, was so apparent; and the Beauty and Loveliness of this Action of the *Samaritan* so bright and evident; that our *Saviour* doubted not to make the *Lawyer* himself judge, which of these *Three* had fulfilled that Command, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*; and which of these *Examples* was most fitted to direct him in the Performance of his Duty. And when he had answered, in favour of the *Samaritan*, that it was *He*, who had done the Duty of a *Neighbour* to this distressed Person: *Jesus* recommends this Pattern to him, in these Words, *Go, and do thou likewise*. Imitate this *Samaritan*. Look upon this Example, and You will not be at a Loss to know, *Who is your Neighbour:* but You will lay it down for a Truth, that every Person in the World, of what *Country*, of what *Profession*, of what *Religion* soever, who is in Necessity, and stands in Need of your Assistance, and whom you can assist

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

without *Injury* to *Yourſelf*, or to Thoſe for whom You are more nearly concerned; That every ſuch Man has a *Title* to your *Beneficence* and *Charity*; That You have the ſame *Relation* to *Him*, that the *Samaritan* had to the diſtreſſed Perſon before-mentioned; That He is one of thoſe *Neighbours* whom God requires you to *love as yourſelf*; and to do unto *Him*, as you might reaſonably expect Others to do unto *You*, were you in his Circumſtances. This was the main Deſign, and principal Intent of this Hiſtory.

But, becauſe in ſuch *Hiſtories*, or *Parables*, there are often *Many* other Things to be learnt and obſerved, beſides the *Main* Point; I ſhall, therefore, in my following Diſcourſe, make ſuch *Obſervations*, as offer themſelves from every Part of this *Story*, as well as from the chief *Scope* of it: but yet I ſhall name None but ſuch as We may probably enough ſuppoſe to have been intended, and hinted at, by our *Lord*. For Inſtance,

I. We cannot but obſerve, that a Whole *Nation* of Men; *Men* who have, and think They have, the greateſt Opportunities of *Religious Knowledge*; Nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the *Study* and public *Offices* of Religion, may be often groſly ignorant of ſome of the plaineſt, and moſt eſſential, *moral Duties*

Duties of It: and, accordingly, their *Practice* may be moſt unreaſonable, and inexcuſable. SERM. XVI.

II. We may obſerve, how glad many Perſons are, of any *Excuſe*, or *Pretenſe*, in order to avoid the greateſt Objects of *Charity*, which will coſt them a little Trouble, or a little Money.

III. From this *Story*, related by our *Lord* himſelf, we may obſerve, that Men of an Orthodox Faith, with reſpect to *God*; and of a true, and a *reveled*, *Religion*, may ſometimes learn the *Practice* of a very great and ſubſtantial *Duty* from Men of an unſound Faith, and a *falſe Religion*; even from *Idolaters*, *Samaritans*, and *Pagans*.

IV. Laſtly, the principal Point intended by our *Lord*, in this *Story*, being to recommend *Goodneſs* and *Love* to all Men; I ſhall ſay ſomething upon the great Duty of univerſal Charity, and a moſt comprehenſive Compaſſion; and our ſtrict Obligation to the *Practice* of it.

I. From this *Hiſtory*, and the *Occaſion* of it, we may obſerve, that a whole Nation of Men, Men who have, and think They have, the greateſt Opportunities of *religious Knowledge*; nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the *Study* of *Religion*, and the *Offices* belonging to God's *Worſhip*, may ſometimes, be groſly ignorant

SERM. XVI.

of ſome of the plaineſt and important *Duties* of *Religion*; and accordingly, their Practice may be moſt unreaſonable and inexcuſable.

Here was the whole *People* of the *Jews*, to whom God had given a ſupernatural *Revelation*; and, with this *Revelation* in their Hands, not a *Man* to be found amongſt them, who was not of a narrow and confined Spirit; who had any Notion of a *Neighbour*, or of Perſons to whom any good Offices were due, out of their own *Society*, and *Church:* not a Man, who underſtood, or practiſed, the great Duty of *Charity*, though it has the cleareſt and moſt evident Dictates of *Nature*, on its Side; Or, who had Generoſity enough to perform the commoneſt Offices of *Civility* or Humanity, to *Any*, but a *Jew*. This was what the Heathen *Poets*, and *Hiſtorians*, often ſeverely condemned, and ridiculed Them for. Here was a Perſon, who had made the *Law* of *Moſes* his Study, who knew not how to expound that *ſecond* great Precept of *loving his Neighbour as himſelf*; but, as it appears, ſtood in Need of ſome farther Inſtruction, in this Point; how willing ſoever he appeared to juſtify Himſelf. And, in our *Saviour's* Anſwer, who always had regard to *Truth* and *Decency*, a *Prieſt* and a *Levite*, Attendants upon the Service of *God* in the *Temple*, and punctual, without Doubt, in every Ceremony

and

and Mode of Worſhip, are repreſented as inexcuſably guilty in one of the chief Branches of practical Religion; paſſing by the greateſt Object of Pity imaginable, a Man in the utmoſt Diſtreſs, ſtanding in need of their immediate Aſſiſtance, and, in all probability, *periſhing* without it. So far from embracing ſuch an Opportunity of doing good, and exerciſing thoſe god-like Virtues of *Charity* and *Compaſſion*; that They are ſpoken of, as wholly unmoved at the Sight, and glad to get out of the Way of that Mercy, which might coſt Them a little Mony or Trouble. SERM. XVI.

What a Devaſtation of All that is good in human Nature, muſt there be ſuppoſed; when it can forget its own manifold Wants and Neceſſities; put off its own tender Affections; throw off all that is ſoft and apt to be moved in it: and contract, in its ſtead, the Roughneſs of a Brute, and the Hardneſs of a Rock? And how low muſt That Man have been ſunk beneath *Himſelf*, who could forget that He himſelf might have been the Man that *fell amongſt Thieves*, and was *left half dead*; and not recollect what would have been the *Anguiſh of his own Soul*, in ſuch a Condition; and what Regard He himſelf would juſtly have expected to his own Cries and Wounds, in ſo miſerable a Caſe? Yet thus it

SERM. XVI.

was, in our *Saviour's* Time: otherwiſe, He would not have had the Thought of repreſenting it, in this Light.

II. The next Obſervation from this *Story*, was, That many Perſons have ſo far hardened Themſelves, in Covetouſneſs, and Inſenſibility, that they are glad of any Pretenſe or Excuſe, for neglecting the moſt moving Objects of Pity, if they are likely to put them to a little Trouble, or Charge: nay, That they will often, rather than be at the Expenſe of a little Compaſſion, arm Themſelves againſt it without any Pretenſe; avoid whatever ſeems to demand their Aſſiſtance; and fly from all Opportunities of doing good.

The *Prieſt*, when he ſaw this poor Man in the moſt wretched Condition; fearing perhaps, it might be an *Object* moving enough to melt him into *Pity*, ſeems to have been contented with the Sight at a Diſtance, and *paſſed by on the other Side*. The *Levite* came, and looked upon him; viewed his *Condition*; was Witneſs to his Wounds and his Diſtreſs; ſaw him to be utterly unable to help himſelf, and deſtined to Death without preſent Aſſiſtance: and yet, was proof againſt ſuch a Spectacle of Miſery; ſhut up his Bowels of *Compaſſion* againſt Him, and *paſſed by* alſo *on the other Side*.

And,

And, as We can obſerve of *other* Men, That, though they abound in *Riches*, and all the Superfluities of *Life*, They yet are willing to be *ignorant* of the *Wants* of their Neighbours; or, hard-hearted enough to deny them the Relief, which They could eaſily grant them: So, let us look into Ourſelves, and ſee, if we alſo are not guilty of this ſame Wickedneſs, Ourſelves, in ſome Degree, or other. How many Petitioners, ſuch as really want and deſerve our Help, have we been deaf to? How often have we avoided a Perſon in diſtreſs, merely becauſe we knew, or ſuſpected, He would beg our Aſſiſtance; and how often have We *paſſed by on the other Side*, upon a diſtant Sight of him? Have We not ſometimes found Ovrſelves but too willing to take no Notice of the Opportunities, put into our Hands, of feeding the Hungry, clothing the Naked, relieving the Sick, and Afflicted, releaſing the Captive, or Priſoner? All theſe, whenever they preſent themſelves to us, are our *Neighbours*; and have a Title to our *Love*, and to, the Effects of this *Love*, all the good Offices we can afford them. And when we refuſe to hear the Cries of the Unhappy, and to adminiſter that Relief, which we have Opportunity, and Ability, to adminiſter; Or, to ſupply the Wants of Thoſe who preſent themſelves to us with the certain Marks of

SERM. XVI.

of Diſtreſs and Miſery upon them, We do, in our ſeveral Degrees, approach to the Barbarity, and imitate the Cruelty, of Thoſe Perſons, in the Story now before Us, who could ſee a Man upon the very brink of Death, deſtitute of all Comfort; and yet not be moved ſo far as to afford him the leaſt Aſſiſtance.

III. I proceed now to a *Third* Obſervation, which, I ſaid, we might make from the ſame *Hiſtory*; *viz.* That Men of an *orthodox Faith* with reſpect to God, and of a true *Religion*, may often learn the Practice of a very great and ſubſtantial Duty from Men of an unſound *Faith*, and falſe *Religion*.

Our bleſſed *Lord*, in his Diſcourſe with the *Samaritan* Woman, (*John* iv^th^) in expreſs Words, preferred the *Jewiſh Religion* far before the *Samaritan*. *We know what we worſhip*; *Ye worſhip Ye know not what*. They of *Samaria* had many *Idolatries* mixed with that Worſhip of the true God, which they retained. The *Jews* worſhiped God according to the Law of *Moſes*; whoſe Inſtructions They received as the Dictates of God himſelf: And by theſe Inſtructions They were led to the ſtricteſt Notions of the *Unity* of the *Supreme Being*; and of the *Perfections* of his *Nature*. But, notwithſtanding all this, We find,

find, in the *History* before Us, that our *Saviour* did not scruple to propose to the Imitation of the *Jews*, in a most important Point of practical *Religion*, the *Example* of an *idolatrous Samaritan*, in order to throw Shame upon their sordid and crampt Notions of *Charity*; and to inspire them with a pious Emulation, and a Resolution, not to be outdone, in the most God-like Virtue, by Those, whom They so much out-did in their Faith, and Worship. SERM. XVI.

I know not how it comes to pass, That the very Things which God designs to make *Some* Men *better* than *Others*, often prove the Occasions, through the Perverseness of these Men themselves, of making them *Worse*. That peculiar *Relation* which God appeared to have to the *Jews*; that *Love* He shewed to their Forefathers; the fighting their Battles; the establishing Them in a good Country; and, above all, the giving Them the Law from Heaven, and leading them into the Knowledge of himself: All these Favours, instead of making them generous and beneficent, served to sowr their Spirits; to contract their Souls; and to shrink their Affections into a narrower Compass. So ungrateful a Return did They make to these Blessings, that They were always reflecting upon the *worse* Condition of the *Nations* around Them; how

SERM. XVI.

little other Mortals were esteemed and favoured by God, in comparison with Themselves; and therefore, how fit to be despised and neglected. And how many Men may we meet with, or hear of, in our own Days, who value themselves upon the mere outward Profession of This or That *Religion*; who are often thanking God that They are Members of the *best*, or only, *Church* in the World; whilst they shamefully neglect many Instances of Morality, which the very *Heathens* excell in; and are boasting of their *Faith*, whilst They are inexcusably wicked in their *Practice?*

What Cruelties have been exercised by some called *Christians*, upon *Infidels*, merely for worldly Ends; and these much the more to be abhorred for being coloured over with the specious Name of *Religion? Cruelties*, which are said to have created in those *Infidels* Themselves an irreconcileable Hatred to the very Name of *Christ*. To speak more plainly, what Methods have been taken by Those of the *Romish Church*, to plant what They call *Christianity*, where it was not; or to maintain, and reform it to their own Minds, where it was? *Methods*, that would make the Ears of an honest *Heathen* to *tingle*; so much beyond the common Bounds of *Barbarity* itself, that They can hardly be expressed; but will always,

ways, I fear, be remembred to the Infamy of the *Chriſtian* Name, by Thoſe who know of no other *Goſpel*, but what ſuch Men have preached. And are there not, amongſt *Thoſe* who utterly condemn this Conduct, *Some* to be found, ſo intent upon the Goods of this World, as to forget thoſe Duties in which the Vigour and Life of *Religion* conſiſts; *Juſtice*, and *Charity*; and to retain little more, than ſo much of the Profeſſion of Religion as may help on their worldly Deſigns? SERM. XVI.

But though God certainly preferred the *Worſhip* of the *Jew*, before That of the *Samaritan*; yet, we need not doubt to ſay that He was much better pleaſed with the good and charitable *Samaritan*, than with the inhuman and unmerciful *Jew*. Nay, we may go farther, and take occaſion from hence to affirm that a Good GOD will make all juſt Allowances for the *Errors* of every ſuch *charitable* Man; but *None* for the wilful Wickedneſs of One who profeſſes a true and holy Religion, and tranſgreſſes the plaineſt Laws of Nature, and Reaſon, and of all *Religions* in the World. *This* admits of no Excuſe: the *Other* may, in the Eyes of *Him*, who ſees the bottom of all Hearts, and knows the Spring from whence all the Errors in the World proceed.

So alſo, though it be certain that a *Chriſtian* of a *Right Faith* is more acceptable to Him, than

SERM. XVI.

than *One* who is not ſo, where there is nothing to make it otherwiſe; yet, We may be as certain, That an honeſt *Heathen* is much more acceptable to him, than a diſhoneſt and deceitful *Chriſtian*; and that a charitable and good-natured *Pagan* has a better Title to his Favour, than a cruel and barbarous *Chriſtian*; let him be never ſo orthodox in his Faith. Nay, for the ſake of the *Goſpel* itſelf, whatever that Part of *Chriſtians* do, who, in the heat of their Zeal for enlarging the Bounds of their *Church*, ſeem to think it a Duty to forget all the Softneſſes of Human Nature, and to practiſe the utmoſt Inhumanity; Let *Us*, (who pretend to be reformed from them) have no hand in caſting ſuch an indeleble Blot upon our Holy Religion: and, while our Mouths are making a good *Confeſſion* of *Faith*, let not our Lives be full of thoſe Vices which the *Goſpel* came to extirpate. And, particularly, Let that extenſive *Charity*, and unbounded Love and Beneficence, adorn our Lives, which make ſo great a Part of, and add ſo great a Luſtre to, that Divine Inſtitution. To this End,

IV. The principal Thing intended by our *Lord*, in the Story we are now conſidering, being to recommend *Goodneſs* and *Love* towards all Men, let us turn our Thoughts to this great Duty of *Univerſal* Charity, and our ſtrict Obligation to the conſtant *Practice* of it.

On

In order to fix the Nature of this, it is proper here again to call to mind, That this universal *Charity* is not designed to break in upon those *Duties* which we owe to *Ourselves*, our *Parents*, our *Children*, our *Friends*, nay, and our *Acquaintance*. It is not in the Power of Any Man to assist every One in distress: and *Nature* directs Him to prefer *These* before *Strangers*, when they come in Competition, and are in the same Degree of Want, or Distress. Accordingly, our *Saviour* here chooses the Instance of *One* in the greatest Danger; at the very Point of Death; certainly perishing without present Help. And had the Case been thus, that the *Priest*, and the *Levite*, were going to a *Father*, or a *Child*, or a *Friend*, in the same Necessity; and had it not in their Power to assist Both; We may venture to say that our *Lord* would not have blamed Them for neglecting a *Stranger* for One in a much nearer Relation to Them, and in the same Condition. And therefore, the Doctrine taught in this History, is rightly understood to be this, That Whoever of the human Race stands in need of our Assistance; whom we can relieve without Injury to *Ourselves*; or without neglecting *Others*, in the same Condition, whom we much more ought to relieve; has a Title to our Benevolence and Kindness: Or is *our Neighbour*, whom we are to *love as Ourselves*;

SERM. XVI.

ſelves; and whom we are willingly to comfort, ſupport, and aſſiſt. And this We are plainly obliged to do, as we are *Men*, of the ſame Claſs and Order of Beings; as we are obliged to imitate Almighty GOD; and as we are *Chriſtians*, to be guided and judged by the Goſpel.

1. As we are *Men*; and, as ſuch, Partakers of the ſame Nature; ſubject to the ſame Accidents; placed in this World upon the ſame Conditions, with Other Men. Look up to the common Creator of all, and the common Father, from whom all had their original; and there is no Difference. The Rich, and the Poor; the Happy, and the Miſerable; the Fortunate, and Unfortunate; are of one Stock. God created the One and the Other: and placed them in the ſame World; where None of them, not the greateſt, and richeſt, and moſt *Powerful* of them all, can be ſecure that he ſhall not, one Day or other, come to be the leaſt, the pooreſt, and moſt diſtreſſed, of Men. How happy ſoever and flouriſhing we are to day; how proſperouſly ſoever Things ſucceed with us; not many Years may, perhaps, make a great Alteration. A ſingle Act of great Imprudence; an unexpected *Loſs*; a very calamitous Accident; Envy and Malice of *Others*: One, or more, of *Theſe*, may overturn All; and deprive us of thoſe good Things, a ſmall Part of which We now think

think it hard to afford our Brethren in their Neceſſities. Let not, therefore, the *Wants* of your *Neighbour*, nor your own *Riches*, make ſuch a Difference between You, in your own Eyes, as to recommend him to your Contempt. Neglect not *Him*, in his diſtreſsfull State, whom God has created with the ſame Faculties you poſſeſs, and placed in the ſame World which you inhabit. Remember that a ſmall Time may, poſſibly, alter the Face of Things, in ſo uncertain a *State* as This: and You will always make *their* Caſe Your own. Call to Mind often that it is not for Men to live without mutual Help, and good Offices: and that the *Richeſt* of all do, indeed, owe ſo much to the Labour and Induſtry of the *Poor*, that They may be glad to ſupply the Wants of the *Diſtreſſed*, when their own Induſtry and Labour cannot. The more frequently You entertain yourſelves with ſuch Thoughts, the greater and more conſtant will be your Regard to your *Fellow-Creatures* around You.

2. We are obliged to practiſe this univerſal Charity, as we are obliged to *imitate* GOD himſelf. That great and all-perfect Being wants not the Aſſiſtance of any Men; nor can ever poſſibly want it: and yet He has not neglected, or deſpiſed, *their* Neceſſities. Thoſe Bleſſings, the

SERM. XVI.

Adminiſtration of which he reſerves to himſelf, how common and univerſal are They? *His Sun ſhines, and his Rain falls*, indifferently on All: and why then ſhould not thoſe *Bleſſings* which He has entruſted with the *Rich* Men of this World, be freely and univerſally diſtributed, as the Neceſſities of *poor* Men require? What would the *Richeſt* of them all do, were the Supreme Creator, and Governour, of all things, quite Regardleſs of *Them*, and of *their* Well-being here below? They could not breath one Moment without his Concurrence; and he affords it them. They could not live, without his *Sun*, and his *Air*, and his *Rain*; and all theſe, by his Command, contribute to their Support. And this is a moſt powerful Argument, That, when *Others* want what they have in Abundance, and what they can ſpare; They ought, with all Readineſs to communicate it to their *Fellow-Creatures*. To refuſe to do this, is indeed a moſt *ungrateful* Return to that GOD who ſhews himſelf, every Day and Hour, ſo good to *Them*. For to refuſe to *imitate* Him in this, is *not to thank him*. Nay, it may juſtly be taken as an affront to Himſelf, that, when He has communicated to *Them* of the Fullneſs of his own Happineſs, *They* have ſo little a Senſe of the Beauty of ſuch Benevolence

volence, as not to think it worthy of the most natural Regard of Imitation. But, SERM. XVI.

3. We are obliged to this Beneficence, as we are *Christians*, to be guided now, and judged hereafter, by the *Gospel* We pretend to embrace. In *that* We are plainly taught, That whatever we have, over and above the Necessities and Conveniences of Ourselves, and those in whom we are most nearly concerned, is intrusted to Us for the Use and Benefit of Those who want it. *To see our Brother have need, and to shut up our Bowels of Compassion against him*, is condemned by the same Gospel, as a Sin: And if in *Sins* there be *Degrees*; We may say that *This* is One of the most unpardonable of all. The Duty of *loving*, that is, *doing Good* to, all our *Fellow-Creatures*, when their *Distresses* call upon Us, is so often *there* repeated, and inculcated, that it is needless to be more particular. The *Example* set before Us, in *That*, is *Christ Jesus*, who was never weary of exerting his *Power* for the Relief, and Comfort, and Support, and Happiness, of all the World around him. The Account *there* given of the Day of *Judgment*, and the great and solemn Audit to come, turns all upon *Charity*; and represents the Case in this Manner. Have you fed the *Hungry*, clothed the *Naked*, enter-

SERM. XVI.

tained the *Stranger*, visited and relieved the *Sick*, supplied the Wants of all Mankind, as far as you were able? If *You* have; You are Those happy Disciples, to whom our *Lord* will say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World.* If *You* have not; the *Other* Sentence is declared to belong to you, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire.* What can be a greater *Demonstration* of how great Value, in the Eyes of God, this *universal Charity* is, and of what a heinous Nature the contrary Vice is? And what can be a greater Argument to Us, to avoid the *One*, and practise the *Other?*

Of

Of the DUTY *of* CHRISTIANS *under* AFFLICTIONS.

SERMON XVII.

HEBREWS xii. 11.

Now, no Chaſtening *for the preſent, ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheleſs, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceful Fruit of Righteouſneſs, unto them which are exerciſed thereby.*

THIS, and the foregoing Verſes, certainly had reference to that Scene of *Perſecution*, to which the Profeſſion and Practice of the *Chriſtian Religion* expoſed Men, in the *firſt* Ages of the *Goſpel*. But the Application of them is ſo natural to the common Calamities and Troubles which Men meet with in this World, even when the outward Profeſſion of their Religion is ſecure and eaſy; that We may, very well, take Occaſi-

SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII.

on from them to diſcourſe of thoſe *Afflictions*, which Mortals ſeem to be born to, in this State; the ſevere Trials of their Faith and Truſt in God, *here*; and the great Inſtruments of Reward and Glory, *hereafter*, to Thoſe who bear them as They ought to do. And, in order to treat this important Subject, in a manner which may be moſt uſeful to the Perſons moſt deeply concerned in it,

I. I ſhall obſerve the little Reaſon we have, any of us all, to expect to paſs through this World without our Portion of Trouble and Affliction.

II. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew after what Manner we ought to bear thoſe *Afflictions*, which may be ſaid to be our almoſt unavoidable Portion.

III. I ſhall point out the great and prevailing *Arguments* there are, to engage us to bear them after the beſt and moſt reaſonable Manner. And

IV. I ſhall conſider the great and unſpeakable Advantages of theſe *Afflictions* to Thoſe who are exerciſed therein, and who undergo them after this good and becoming Manner.

I. I ſhall

SERM. XVII.

I. I ſhall obſerve the little Reaſon we have, any of us, to expect to paſs through this World without our Portion of Trouble and *Affliction.*

Look abroad into the preſent State of Things, and extend your View as far as That will permit: and find out, if it be poſſible, thoſe happy Men, who meet with no Bitterneſs; no Misfortune; no Calamity, in this World. You would think, perhaps, that Such might moſt ſucceſsfully be ſought for, amongſt the Virtuous and Beſt Part of Mankind. But *Theſe*, if you will believe their own Words, have been moſt expoſed to the Calamities and Misfortunes of this uncertain State; and to have been exerciſed the moſt ſeverely with Trials and Afflictions, here below. It has been, in all Ages, a Sort of a Reproach which They themſelves have made to *Providence*, that their Virtue, though purſued and cultivated ſincerely, has only, at preſent, ſeemed to entitle them to more Troubles, and more Misfortunes, than *Others* have experienced; and that ill Succeſs, and croſs Accidents, have attended *Them*, when the wicked Part of the World have ſeemed to be at Reſt, and to have all that their Hearts could wiſh to enjoy.

SERM. XVII.

But, though this has been ſaid, in the Heat and Paſſion, if I may ſay ſo, of *Good Men*; yet it cannot, in any tolerable Senſe, be proved that *Wickedneſs* is any more a Security againſt Troubles and Afflictions, in this State, than true Goodneſs and Holineſs. It may, indeed, often proſper, ſo far as to procure outward Grandeur, and immenſe Riches: But what is that to the State of Mind within, which is the Seat of Happineſs? How many *Projects* does the *wicked* Man often frame, that are not fulfilled, but generally brought to Nothing, when he attempts them? How many *Pleaſures* does he purſue, that end in Nothing but the *Bitterneſs* of *Diſappointment*; and often, in, what is much worſe, the *Bitterneſs* of a wounded *Conſcience*, which He always carries about with him, and from which he cannot fly. Providence has not yet ſo forſaken the preſent Condition of *Virtue* and *Goodneſs*, in this World, as to leave *Wickedneſs* wholly triumphant; or to give it the Encouragement of the *good Things* of this Life, without the common Mixture of the *Bad*. Far otherwiſe. We ſee, the *Wicked* Man often ſuffers, in this World: Nor can all his Cunning and Contrivance, in *ſome* Caſes, keep off from him the public Diſgrace of Evils much above the ordinary

dinary and common Evils, of which He alſo has his Share, here below. SERM. XVII.

It may indeed, be ſufficient, to aſk, upon this Head, Of all the Men ordained to live in this world, Who is there; Who has there ever been; Who can there ever be, truly *Self-ſufficient?* Who, ſo fitted for *Happineſs* within himſelf, as to place no Part of it in any thing *without* him; or, to ſeek for no Part of it any where but *within* his own Breaſt? Who, ſo perfect, or, Who framed after ſo peculiar a Manner, as not to find it unavoidable to delight in, or love, ſome particular *Good*, ſo as to make the Uncertainty, or Loſs, of it, a great *Evil?* *One* indeed, fixes upon *one* Thing; and *Another*, upon *Another*: *One*, upon the *Riches* of this World; *Another*, upon the *Honours* and Pride of it; *Another*, upon Reputation and Glory; *Another*, upon his *Family*, and his *Children*; *Another*, upon the Pleaſures of *Friendſhip*, or *Learning*: But ſtill every One, upon ſomething, or other. All find it ſo neceſſary, to ſeek Support, under the expected Evils of this Life, from ſome one, or other, of theſe, or the like, *good Things*, that They conſtantly, and univerſally, do it. And though the Beſt of them do Nothing but what Nature leads Them to; and though They make the wiſeſt Choice poſſible, in fixing

SERM XVII.

fixing upon ſomething the moſt proper of all Things *below*, for their Aſſiſtance; and though They purſue it with *Innocence*, and a due Regard to *Religion*; yet even ſtill it muſt be owned That there is Room enough left for very *ſevere* and piercing *Afflictions*. There is one ſingle Circumſtance of human Life, which is alone ſufficient to render inſipid every Thing that can be called Enjoyment. I mean, the *Habitual Want* of *Health*, which Many, we ſee, labour under. And much more are the frequent Returns of the moſt *violent Pains* and *Diſeaſes*, which are the *Portion* of *Others*, able of Themſelves, to ſcatter *Miſery*, where *Joy* might otherwiſe reign; and to bring to Nought the Happineſs of Thoſe who poſſeſs the greateſt of all *temporal Goods*.

Nor do I ſee a *Remedy* in this Caſe. For we muſt take our *Natures*, as God has made them; and the *World*, as we find it. We cannot pretend, by any *Self-Sufficiency*, to procure for Our-ſelves, that little Happineſs which We, for a few Hours or Days, ſometimes obtain in this State; and which we cannot help deſiring, any more than we can help deſiring *to live*. And yet it is true, That, whatever it is, here below, that our peculiar Conſtitution of Mind directs us to purſue, in Aid of our Happineſs, muſt have

ſo

so much of the *Nature* of the other *Good Things* of this State, that it cannot but be, one Time or other, the Occasion of Uneasiness and Affliction. But I come now to the next Point I proposed, which was SERM. XVII.

II. To shew, after what Manner it is the Duty of reasonable Creatures, and *Christians*, to bear those *Afflictions*, which are so unavoidable in this State.

And here, I think, we are to consider the different and various Tempers, Educations, and Dispositions, of Mankind; by which it must come to pass that They cannot possibly All shew themselves equally couragious, or equally patient, in the same Circumstances.

It is nothing to *one* Person to lose a Summ of *Mony*, who yet is sunk by the Loss of an exalted *Station* in Life. It is a small Matter to *another* to suffer in this Point of *Honour*, who cannot bear the least Disappointment in *Profit*, or *Gain*. And a third Person, perhaps, values a *Friend*, or a *Relation*, more than the most covetous Man upon Earth does his Bags; or the most Ambitious, his *high* Estate. And, again, the Passions of Some may be stronger by Nature than those of Others; and their personal Weakness greater: They may be of a softer and more tender Nature, and

SERM. XVII.

and ſo capable of deeper Impreſſions, and more diſorderly Commotions of Mind, than their Neighbours: and the Notions They have received in their Education, may have ſtill more diſtinguiſhed Them from Other Men. Allowances are to be made for all theſe Things: and Almighty God will certainly make all reaſonable Allowances for ſuch Variety of Circumſtances, and Diſpoſitions.

It cannot be expected, that One who is poſſeſſed with the Love of Mony, or Honour, can bear a *Separation* from *Them*, with as little Shew of Remorſe, as One who never felt any ſtrong Inclination towards them. And ſo likewiſe, in other Caſes. But, taking all theſe Conſiderations into the Account, the leaſt that can be our Duty, under the ſevereſt Diſpenſations of God's Providence towards us, in the Removal, or Diminution, of thoſe good Things, from which we have expected any Addition to our Happineſs in this World, is, To acknowledge God to be perfectly wiſe, and perfectly good; much better able to judge and to determine what is good for Us, than we are, for ourſelves; and to ſubmit to Him, as to a Governour, to whom there is all the Reaſon in the World to commit Ourſelves, and all our Fortunes.

I do

SERM. XVII.

I do not think, and therefore, I cannot teach, That this *Submiſſion* to Almighty GOD, which is equally the *Duty* of *All*, muſt be joined with a *rejoicing* in ſuch *ſevere Diſpenſations*. On the contrary, It ſeems to me to be perfectly conſiſtent with a deep and ſorrowful Senſe of the Loſs we have ſuſtained, and of the Good removed from us. Otherwiſe indeed, it can hardly bear the *Name* of an *Affliction*.

I know, In the Caſe of *Perſecution* for the Sake of the Goſpel, our bleſſed Lord ſpeaks, of *rejoycing*, and *being exceeding glad*; and his Apoſtles, of *counting it all Joy* to *ſuffer* for *his Sake*. But theſe are to be looked upon as *Figurative Deſcriptions* of a State of Mind, reaſonable, indeed, in itſelf; but not commanded, as the ſtrict *Duty* of every *Chriſtian*.

It is, in itſelf, I ſay, reaſonable, if we conſider only the Goodneſs of the Cauſe, and the greater Rewards of another Life, which our *Sufferings* procure us, even to expreſs a *Joy*, in the midſt of All the Pains We can undergo, for the Sake of our Religion. Nor can it be denied That there have been Inſtances of Men, who have, in this Beſt of *Cauſes*, ſhewn all the Marks of a *real Joy* in their *Sufferings* for it. I wiſh, the like could not be ſaid of *Others*,

SERM. XVII.

Others, in the very *Worſt*, and moſt unworthy of ſuch an *Appearance*. But, on the other Side, conſidering the Nature and Circumſtances of Man, in this World, it ſeems impoſſible for *All* to arrive at ſuch a Perfection, as to be able *literally* to fulfil ſuch Expreſſions. And therefore, This cannot be the *Duty* of *All*. I am ſure, the Apoſtle, in the Text, expreſſly ſaith, that *no Chaſtening is, for the preſent, joyous, but grievous*; and this, with regard to our *Suffering* for the Sake of the *Goſpel*. Nay, our *Lord* himſelf not only adviſes his firſt *Diſciples*, in ſome of his laſt Hours, to *watch and pray*, that *They may not enter into* ſuch *Temptations*, or ſevere *Trials*, on account of their Relation to *Him*; but recommends to Them in *other* Paſſages, the Prudence of avoiding Them, as far as They innocently and honourably could. And if We call to mind *his own Practice*, when His *Sufferings* preſſed cloſe upon Him, for the moſt glorious Cauſe, which He knew to be his *Father's* Will, and *his own* Undertaking; We ſhall ſee that He did not think it unworthy of his Character to ſhew the ſincere Tokens of *exceeding Sorrow*, mixed with his *Submiſſion* and *Perſeverance*. So that, even in this extraordinary Caſe of *Perſecution* for *His* Sake, it may be juſtly ſaid, That an honeſt *Chriſtian* performs

performs that *Duty* which GOD requires of Him, when He *patiently* ſubmits to Pain and Torment, as the *Act* of *Providence*, rather than *deny* his Maſter, or *abjure* his *Religion*.

And upon all the foregoing Conſiderations, with regard to the *uſual* Calamities attending human Life, I ſhall not ſcruple to ſay, That what the Great and Good *Ruler* of all Things expects from his imperfect Creatures, as a *Duty*, is, Not that they ſhould wiſh for, or deſire, *Calamities*; or ſhew a *Stupidity*, or *Joy*, under them: but that They ſhould have Recourſe to the Conſiderations of Religion; and make a rational and patient Submiſſion to Him, as to a wiſe and good Governour, in all the *Afflictions* which They may experience in the Courſe of this World. And now, in order to this,

III. I ſhall point out the ſtrong Reaſons there are, to induce them to bear theſe *Afflictions* with Patience, and a proper Submiſſion to Almighty God.

No one can deny that it is both juſt and reaſonable that God ſhould ſometimes try the Duty and Affections of his Creatures, provided ſuch Trials contain Nothing in them beyond their own Strength, or That which he is pleaſed to afford them. Nor can any

SERM. XVII.

one deny it to be highly reaſonable that Men, in ſuch a State as this, ſhould give ſome plain Evidence that they believe there is a God, a Being of perfect Goodneſs, and perfect Wiſdom, who governs and diſpoſes all Things here below. Now, What greater Evidence of This, is it poſſible for Us to give, than patiently to ſubmit all our Affairs to his Determination, and quietly to acquieſce in his Decrees? This doth not at all forbid Us to make uſe of our own Prudence, in guarding, as much as we can, our Lives here below from all the *Evils* of this *State:* but teaches Us to do this under the Inſpection of his Eye, and with a conſtant Submiſſion of *our* Wills to *His*. And the ſerious Conſideration of our own weak and imperfect Faculties, and of His infinite Perfections, will ſoon convince Us, that ſuch a *Submiſſion* is, in our preſent Condition, our greateſt Happineſs.

If We conſider ourſelves, and the *Powers* that belong to us; We ſhall find how narrow and confined they are. How many material Things are there, that we muſt be ignorant of, even of great Concern to ourſelves, and our Happineſs here below? By how many Paſſions, and how many Fancies, are We often led out of the Paths of Right Judgment

about our own true *Good?* And this, to such a Degree, That other Men, weak and frail like Ourſelves, can often ſee our real Intereſt, better than we can, merely becauſe They are not Ourſelves, or biaſſed by any fooliſh Self-love, when they judge in our Caſe? Experience itſelf has frequently taught Us, how miſtaken we have been in our paſt Determinations; and how little able to judge what would be the Conſequence, were all our own Deſires fulfilled: And therefore, how miſerably unfit to allott to Ourſelves our own Portion of *Good* and *Evil* in this World. If theſe Things be ſo; can there be a greater Happineſs than to be under the Governance of a Benevolent and all-wiſe Guide, who cannot be miſtaken in our real Good; and who, in all his Diſpenſations towards us, is Himſelf directed by a conſtant regard to our true and laſting Intereſt? SERM. XVII.

In the poor Condition of human Life here below, What a Bleſſing is it, to Children, and Perſons not come to the Maturity of their Judgment, to be under the Conduct and Management of wiſer Perſons than themſelves; more experienced in the Affairs of this World; and better Judges of what is fit for them, and what not? How often might They ruine

SERM. XVII.

themſelves, under the Notion of Good and Pleaſure, if they were not ſo? How often would their Appetites, or their childiſh Conceits, be the Inſtruments of their Unhappineſs? And what are the beſt and wiſeſt of Us, when compared with Almighty God, but weak as Children, and as truly unfit to chooſe for ourſelves, in many Caſes of ſingular Importance to Our chief Concern? And if it be an Happineſs to *Them* to be under the Guidance of Others, whoſe Duty it is to keep them from noxious and hurtful Things, and to grant them Nothing but what is truly good for them; how much more is it happy for *Us*, that there is One above us, to train and educate us to a more bleſſed State, by the Diſcipline of Afflictions when he ſees them neceſſary: and thus to conſult our true Intereſt by denying us the Enjoyment of what is not ſo good for us as we imagine; and by not permitting us to ruine ourſelves; as, probably, we ſhould do, were our Deſires, in this World, more frequently granted us.

It is a Work of Difficulty, I confeſs, contentedly to part with That, on which we have founded any of our Hopes of Happineſs in this State. But ſee how eaſy, even for worldly Reaſons, and without any of the

the Assistances of Religion, many Men can be, under great and considerable Disappointments; and see also how Time has performed those Cures upon the most disturbed Minds, which They have not permitted Reason and Consideration to do: And then judge, Whether it be not much more becoming Us, to have this Cure effected by wise and excellent Motives, or, in other Words, by the most reasonable and most unexceptionable Methods. And what can be of more proper Influence upon any ingenuous and well-disposed Mind, than the Consideration of God's Providence; the Thought that it is agreeable to his Will we should suffer all we suffer; that the Circumstances we are in, are what He has judged proper, for the best and wisest Reasons, to allott us: Or, at least, that our Portion is so far his Determination, that, if He had seen it to be bad for us, all Things considered, He would not so much as have permitted it to be what it is? And this is much the same Satisfaction, as if He himself had assured us that it is what we ourselves should choose, did we know our own good, and could we see all Things as they truly are. SERM. XVII.

And this leads to another Consideration very well fitted to make us easy and resigned; That, let our Condition be what it will, at

SERM. XVII.

preſent, it is ſuch as We ourſelves ſhould chooſe, or patiently ſubmit to, as the fitteſt and beſt, if all Things, proper to be conſidered, could be preſent to our View. For the Reaſon why We do not, at firſt Thought, acquieſce in all the Diſpenſations of God Almighty, is becauſe We do not ſee that Fitneſs and Propriety in them, which He always has before his Eyes. And this proceeds from the Imperfection of our Capacities and Underſtandings: which Defect can be ſupplied by Nothing but our Submiſſion to a ſuperior and perfect Underſtanding.

It may be an innocent Speculation to think how great our Happineſs would be, if we were ſo framed, as to ſee perfectly every Particular, and all poſſible Circumſtances, relating to our Condition here, and hereafter; what is truly our *Good*, and what is not: But this is not given to Us. We may ſeek after ſuch Knowledge, as well as we can; but we muſt be content with that Cloud of Darkneſs in which it is at preſent wrapped up; and give Repoſe to our *Souls* in the reaſonable Aſſurance that there is a Being ſuperior to us, who made us, and who governs us; that this Being ſees all Things as they truly are, in their own Natures and Tendencies; and orders Nothing for his Creatures, but

but what they may be satisfied is best and fittest to be ordered. And did we but heartily believe this, and duely consider it, it could not but be a mighty Relief to us in all our Exigencies: And we could not but feel the satisfaction of a rational Faith supplying the Defects and Imperfections of our own Natures.

But, in order to this Relief, We must strictly guard against that great, and, I had almost said, blasphemous Error, which represents God, as acting, in the Government of the World, and in the Disposition of the Fortunes of his Creatures, after an arbitrary and tyrannical manner, in order to shew his Power and Greatness: and always think of Him, as a *Being* who delights in Nothing more than in doing Good; and esteems Nothing so much his Glory, as to act constantly, and without Interruption, according to the eternal Rules of Justice and Goodness. And if we would often thus represent to Ourselves Almighty God, as the Best and Wisest of All Beings, who could have no End in creating us, and can have none since in governing us, separated from our own Happiness; This would be a solid Ground of inward Satisfaction and Contentment, amidst all the Unhappinesses and Pains, and Distresses, of

SERM. XVII.

this World: especially, if we added to the Argument, That this same God has assured Us of *Another* future and unchangeable State, in which He will reward the Patience and Resignation we have exercised in *This*; and make us ample Amends for all the temporal *Evils* we have here sustained. This is what leads Me, as I proposed,

IV. To speak of the great Advantages of *Afflictions* to those who *are exercised therein*; and who bear them with a due Christian Patience, and Submission.

To pass through an uncertain miserable World well, has the greatest Encouragement, when it is known to be the Road to a certain and happy State; a State, in which we shall receive infinitely more Good than ever we have lost here; if we press towards it with a manly and Christian Greatness of Mind. And this Encouragement We cannot be without, if We truly believe That there are *Treasures* in *Heaven*, sufficient to make the Want of all the Gold of *this* World tolerable; Honours and Glories, sufficient to make the Disgraces of this State sit easy; and Happiness in such Perfection, as to make all the *Miseries* experienced here below, appear of little Moment, when compared with what is to come.

How

SERM. XVII.

How then ſhould this Thought contribute to the enduring any temporal Evils and Calamities with a decent Patience, That, in the other State, if we make ourſelves worthy of the Rewards of it, All will be exactly what we could wiſh; the Loſs, or Want, of the good Things of this World made up to us a thouſand Fold, by large Communications of unmixed Happineſs; *Sickneſs*, and *Pain*, exchanged for *Health*, and *Vigour*, of Body and Mind; Infirmities of every Sort, far removed from Us: and this happy Condition made more happy by the Certainty and Stability of It; free from the uneaſy Suſpicion of any future Alteration, or any the leaſt Decay in the Favour of GOD towards Us.

And, Is it not worth while to be Patient under the tranſient Evils of this World, which you muſt ſuffer whether you will, or no; and which are made much more intolerable for want of a reaſonable Submiſſion? Nay, to ſhew a proper Degree of Contentment under them, when this will certainly procure you a higher Place in the Love of God, and a greater Portion of the Rewards of Heaven, than you could hope for without them? It is indeed, for this Purpoſe, that God layeth his afflicting Hand upon Some; not to cruſh or oppreſs them,

SERM. XVII.

into a ſtupid, unactive, and deſponding Condition; but to give them an Opportunity of demonſtrating their Faith in *Him*, and of practiſing thoſe Precepts of *Religion* they have treaſured up in their Minds.

And that this does not proceed from any Want of Love, and paternal Benevolence, towards Them, the *Final* Iſſue of theſe *Corrections*, when *Patience ſhall have had its perfect Work*, will openly prove: when the great *Ends*, propoſed by Him, will appear to have been, That He might more effectually take their Thoughts off from this wretched World; and fix them more firmly upon another and better State, to which They are haſtening apace: That They might do the more Service to true Religion, by their Examples, *here*; and deſerve more of his Favour, and receive a brighter Crown of Glory, *hereafter*: That He might make their Virtue and their Faith *to ſhine* more bright *before Men*, in *this* State; and Themſelves more *illuſtrious* Inſtances of his Love, before his Angels, in Heaven. And we may add to what I have ſaid, That thus it has pleaſed the ſame GOD to deal with Some of the greateſt Examples of *Virtue*, (always amiable in his Eyes,) which have appeared in the *Heathen*, *Jewiſh*, and *Chriſtian*, World: and

even with his own *Son*, *in whom* He declared Himſelf *well pleaſed*. SERM. XVII.

The mention of this *Divine Perſon*, who, when in our Form, was a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; and who is both our Maſter, and our great Original to copy after, leads Me to think, I can conclude with Nothing better, than this ſhort Exhortation. Let every one of us, with reſpect to the *Evil Things* of this Life, have His Example always in Our View. This will teach Us that, *before* any Affliction is actually come upon Us, We may becomingly ſay, with Him, *Father, remove this Cup from me*; but it will teach Us alſo to add, in *his* Words, *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as Thou willeſt*. And *after* the Time is come when we ſee it to be *God's* Will that we muſt ſuffer Affliction, in ſome Point or other; let us learn, from the ſame perfect Pattern, to endure it after ſuch a Manner, as that, being made like unto *Him*, in Suffering, and in Patience, in *this* World, We may be made *like unto him* alſo, in the Glories of That which is *to come*.

The

The CHRISTIAN RACE.

SERMON XVIII.

1 CORINTHIANS ix. 24, 25.

Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, *run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every Man that ſtriveth for the Maſtery is temperate in all Things. Now* They *do it to obtain a* corruptible *Crown, but* We *an* incorruptible.

THESE Words are an *Alluſion* to thoſe public *Races*, which were much in Uſe amongſt the *Heathens*, in St. *Paul's* Days, and drew together a great Concourſe of People from all Parts. And as it was His Cuſtom to draw Arguments for Care, and Diligence, and Patience, in *Chriſtians*, from what paſſed in the World about Him; ſo we find Him frequently refering to all the Other *Sports*, and *Conteſts*, then in Uſe: ſuch as *Fighting*, *Wreſtling*, and

SERM. XVIII.

SERM. XVIII.

and the like. Thus, ſpeaking of the *Chriſtian Conteſt* He ſays, *We* wreſtle *not*, Or, as it is in the *Original*, *Our* wreſtling *is not*, againſt *Fleſh and Blood*, *but againſt Principalities and Powers*, &c. Eph. vi. 12. And, immediately after the *Text*, ſpeaking of Himſelf, He ſays, *So fight I, not as One that beateth the Air*; Or, more literally, *as One who is not beating the Air*, in a feigned Fight, merely to exerciſe his *Arms* and *Hands*: But, like One in earneſt, *I keep under*, or rather, *beat my Body, and bring it into Subjection* as an *Adverſary*: which He expreſſes by Words taken from the *Bruiſes* and *Marks* of thoſe ſevere *Blows* given to *Adverſaries* in the public *Fightings* of his Days; and the Inſults over Them when conquered. And, in the triumphant Review of his own Conduct, He particularly makes uſe of the Expreſſions peculiar to theſe Games, and Conteſts, 2 *Tim.* iv. 7. I have *fought* a good *Fight*; I have finiſhed my *Race*: A *Crown* of *Glory*, *is laid up for me*. So alſo, in other Places of his Writings.

In the Words of the *Text*, He entirely confines his *View* to the public *Races*, then much frequented: And They may be thus interpreted. "You know that They who pretend to *run* in the *Stadium*, or Place in which the publiic

public *Races* are performed, *All* indeed *run* for the *Prize* propoſed; but that *One* only obtains it; *He*, that outdoes the reſt, in Activity, and Swiftneſs. And the like may be ſaid of the *Chriſtian Race*. They who profeſs *Chriſtianity*, or pretend to be aiming at the Rewards promiſed to *Chriſtians*, *All* pretend likewiſe to *run* the Chriſtian Courſe, or lead the Life of *Chriſtians*. But it is *one* Sort only of *Theſe*, who obtain the Prize propoſed; only *They*, who come up to the Conditions required by their great Maſter and Judge. *So run that ye may obtain*; that is, Since there is but *one* Sort of Profeſſed *Chriſtians*, who can obtain the *Crown* of *Life*, contended for, it ought to be your Endeavour *ſo to run* the Chriſtian Race, that you may be of that Number. But in order to this, You muſt conſider That *Every one who ſtriveth*, in theſe *Races* amongſt the Heathens, undergoes a great deal of Pains, and exerciſes the ſevereſt Inſtances of Command over his Appetites, in order to the preparing his Body, and going through the Fatigue of his Undertaking. *Now* They *do all this to obtain a Garland* of fading Leaves, and the *Acclamations* of Men periſhing like themſelves: How much more ſhould *We* Chriſtians willingly undergo the like Care and Labour, who expect a far greater Reward; an *incorruptible Crown* of never-fading Glory,

and

SERM. XVIII.

and eternal Honour, in the Preſence of God?"

Thus we ſee what the *Apoſtle* aims at, in this *Alluſion* to the Preparation, Care, and Labour, of Thoſe who ſtrove in the Sports and Games of the Heathen. And from theſe Words, thus interpreted, I propoſe,

I. To conſider the Nature of the Chriſtian *Race*, repreſented to us in this Alluſion; and what is neceſſary in order to Succeſs in it: under which will appear the main Intention of the *Apoſtle* in this Paſſage. And,

II. To take occaſion from hence to enlarge the *Apoſtle's* Argument, by adding an *Inſtance* or Two, of that Care, and Labour, and Pains, which the Men of the *World*, by their own Choice, undergo, for the obtaining as great a Portion as They can, of the good Things *below*; in order to ſtir up an Emulation and Zeal, in *Chriſtians*, who profeſs to ſeek after nobler Enjoyments *above*, to equal, if not excell, Them, in all the like Care, and Labour, and Patience.

I. We are led to conſider the *Nature* of the *Chriſtian Race*, repreſented to us in this *Alluſion*, and what is requiſite to our Succeſs in it: not

not excluding what St. *Paul* often alludes to, and argues, relating to the *Other* public *Games* and *Conteſts* for Glory, amongſt the Men of his *Age*. SERM. XVIII.

Let us ſee, then, what was thought requiſite, at that Time, towards finiſhing thoſe *Races*, to which the Apoſtle alludes, ſo ſucceſsfully, as to obtain the Garland, or *corruptible Crown*, He here ſpeaks of; and conſider whether this will not lead us into ſome proper Thoughts about the Nature of the *Chriſtian Life*; and what is requiſite towards the obtaining the *End* propoſed by all who are really *Chriſtians*. Now,

1. In order to the ſtriving and contending ſucceſsfully, in theſe *Races*, or other Exerciſes, it was thought abſolutely neceſſary for the *Contenders* to undergo a ſevere *Preparation*, by which they were made fit for the Fatigues of their *Conteſts*. And this is one Thing principally aimed at, by the *Apoſtle* in the *Text*, when He ſays, *Every one that ſtriveth for the Maſtery*, or that pretends to *run*, and contend, for the Prize, *is temperate in all Things*; performs every Inſtance of *Self-denial*, and Command of all his Appetites, neceſſary to fit him for the ſucceſsful finiſhing of his main Undertaking. And from hence the *Apoſtle*

SERM. XVIII.

Apoſtle takes occaſion to argue, *Much more* ſhould *You Chriſtians* go through the *Diſcipline* of a due *Preparation*; as the *Prize You* contend for, is infinitely more excellent: and then goes on, in the Words following the *Text*, to let the *Corinthians* know that He himſelf found great Neceſſity of *ſubduing his Body*, leſt his *Bodily Appetites* ſhould hinder Him in that extraordinary *Courſe*, which He, as an *Apoſtle*, had to *run*. And, certainly, whatever any *Chriſtians* may find neceſſary, in order to the having a perfect Command over thoſe *Bodily* Paſſions, and Appetites, which are the great Enemies They have to ſtrive againſt, ought to be ſtrictly performed, if They would *run* their Chriſtian *Race* with Succeſs.

But This was not the only *Preparation They* were to undergo, who of old contended for Victory in the public *Races* and *Games*. There was another *Preparation* alſo neceſſary, without which they could not hope ſucceſsfully to finiſh their Courſe: A *Preparation*, by which they were inſtructed in the *Nature* of their *Courſes*; the *Rules* of their own Conduct; the *Stratagems* of their Antagoniſts; and animated with a Deſire of the Glory of Conquerours. And as, without ſuch a *Preparation*, it was invain for *Them* to enter upon their

their Work: ſo, likewiſe, it is invain for *Chriſtians* to enter the Liſts againſt the Enemies of their Souls; and to undertake ſo laborious a Taſk as the *Chriſtian Life*, which is ſurrounded by *Adverſaries* on every Hand, and admits no Reſt 'till They are come to the End of their *Race*; it is invain, I ſay, for Men to undertake this, without the like *Preparation*, of conſidering and knowing, what is neceſſary for their great Undertaking. SERM. XVIII.

For inſtance, They muſt be inwardly convinced that *Jeſus Chriſt* was ſent by GOD, and reveled eternal Rewards and Puniſhments to Mankind: or elſe, They will be greatly in danger from every Temptation that allures them; and too apt to yield to the inviting Scenes of Pleaſure, Profit, or Honour, always ready to be preſented to their View. They muſt be forewarned of all the *Dangers* in their Way; all the *Wiles* and *Stratagems* of their *Enemies*, ſo often ſpoken of in *Scripture*, the *World*, the *Fleſh*, and the *Devil:* otherwiſe, They may be apt to be *ſurprized* by the *Images* of *Good*, which may be unexpectedly placed in their View, to turn them aſide from their *Courſe*. They muſt alſo be perfectly inſtructed in the *Conditions* required of them; and in all thoſe *Rules*, that are neceſſary for the running their Chriſtian *Race* aright: otherwiſe, They

SERM. XVIII.

may miſtake fatally, in Matters eſſential to their Succeſs; and embrace *Evil* for *Good*, and *Wrong* for *Right*; and find themſelves, at laſt, going backward rather than advancing forward. A *Preparation* of themſelves in theſe and the like Particulars, by conſulting and conſidering the *Goſpel* itſelf, and not the *Phanſies* of Men, is what all *Chriſtians* muſt undergo, before they can hope to finiſh their Courſe with Glory. But

2. In the performing of the *Races* of Old, to which St. *Paul* here alludes, there was a Courſe of Labour, and Care, and Diligence, continued without the leaſt Interruption of Idleneſs, or impertinent Trifling. And This leads us to conſider the *Chriſtian Race* likewiſe, as a Buſineſs of conſtant Care, and Diligence, never to be interrupted, if we deſire to arrive ſucceſsfully to the End of it. And indeed, To imagine that *Chriſtianity* can ever diſpenſe with the greateſt Degree of ſerious *Attention* and Care, is to contradict the *Deſign* of it, and to undervalue the *Rewards* it propoſes. For the *Chriſtian* is never quite ſecure on this Side Heaven; becauſe He is never in a State free from dangerous Enemies. He is nearly joined to His own deceitful and flattering Appetites, which are, upon all Occaſions, endeavouring to ſeduce Him; He lives in a World which, every

every Hour, furniſhes him with new Scenes of *Trial*; and with *Objects* framed to terriſy Him from *Virtue*, and to allure him to *Vice*. And has ſuch a Perſon any Reaſon to think of remitting his *Diligence*, or looſening the Reins of *Government* over himſelf; when one fatal Miſtake, or Slip, through an inadvertent Negligence only, may involve him in Circumſtances, from which He may never be able to extricate himſelf? Let the *Chriſtian* only remember That it is the *Habit* of *Virtue* which is the very *Race* He is obliged to run; and then conſider that this *Habit* is the continual repeated *Practice* of every particular *Duty*, as often as Occaſion offers; and he can have no doubt That the moſt conſtant and ſerious Care is requiſite towards the keeping and preſerving ſuch an *Habit*, as well as towards the obtaining it. SERM. XVIII.

The Importance, therefore, of the Matter; and the Dangers that encompaſs a *Chriſtian*, through every Portion of his *Time*, make his *Race* alſo, like Thoſe of Old, a continued Courſe of watchful *Labour* and *Care*: But not of *Labour*, and *Care*, without even preſent *Pleaſure* and *Satisfaction* mixed with it. For it is not poſſible for us to conceive a greater inward Pleaſure, than what

SERM. XVIII.

the good *Chriſtian* enjoys, in the Teſtimony his own Conſcience gives to the Uprightneſs and Reaſonableneſs of his Conduct; or a truer *Satisfaction* than He finds in the Thoughts of the Favour of his great Judge, and in the Proſpect of the Rewards of Heaven.

3. In order to the right Performance of thoſe *Races*, antiently ſo much in uſe, there was a Neceſſity of *laying aſide every Weight*, or *Burthen*, in order to make the *Body* as active, and light, and unmoleſted, as poſſible. So, likewiſe, in order to the ſucceſsful running of the *Chriſtian Race*, every *Burthen*, or *Impediment*, which may make us the leſs fit for our Courſe, is to be laid aſide, and thrown from us.

Thus St *Paul*, in the *twelfth* Chapter of his *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, alluding to the ſame *Games*, ſays, *Let us lay aſide every Weight*, in order to *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us:* And this very properly, becauſe the more free Men are from *Weights*, the more likely to perform their *Race* ſucceſsfully. What the *Apoſtle* particularly meant by *every Weight*, He explains by adding immediately, *and the Sin which does ſo eaſily beſet Us:* or rather, *every Weight*, even *Sin* which is always cloſe to Us; and is certainly, the heavieſt *Weight*, and ſtrongeſt *Impediment*,

to

to a *Chriſtian* in his *Race*; And a *Weight* therefore, which He muſt of neceſſity *lay aſide*, if He has one Thought, in earneſt, of *running*, *ſo as to obtain the Prize*. SERM. XVIII.

4. Our Lord himſelf, in ſpeaking of the *Chriſtian Life*, and what is neceſſary in order to it, goes ſtill farther; and often mentions the removing out of the Way, every thing which may *offend*, or, which may be the Occaſion of our *Stumbling* in our *Chriſtian Courſe*; and ſo, of *loſing the Prize*, by falling before We come to the End. And this, let it be of what Nature it will; never ſo neceſſary to our Comfort and Happineſs in *this* World; never ſo dear, or uſeful to us; never ſo painful in the Removal of it; though it be our *right Hand*, or our *right Eye*, if we cannot keep it without *ſinning*, We are to *cut it off*, or *pull it out*, and *caſt it from Us*. Otherwiſe, we canot overcome in the Chriſtian Conteſt.

How ridiculous a Thing would it have been for any Perſon, in the *Races* of Old, to have pretended ſo much as to enter upon his *Courſe*, without having firſt removed from himſelf all that might *hinder* him in it? And how much more unaccountable is it, in any *Chriſtian*, to think of arriving, with Glory, at the End of his *Race*, or of being victorious in his ſpiritual

SERM. XVIII.

Conteſts, whilſt he is reſolved againſt parting with any thing grateful at preſent to his Senſes; though never ſo prejudicial to his Virtue, and of never ſo fatal Conſequence to his *Pretenſions*.

And yet, *This* is what we ſee every Day amongſt profeſſed *Chriſtians*, That Men can hope and expect to be ſaved by *Jeſus Chriſt*; and ſeem to aim at that *incorruptible Crown* which He has promiſed; and yet are moſt unwilling to part with Thoſe beloved *Vices*, which They themſelves know to be inconſiſtent with all *Hope* of it: as if They were determined to arrive at *Heaven*, in their own Way, or not at all; and thought to take it by Storm, without thinking once in earneſt, of the *Conditions* required of them. But *Theſe* are *Chriſtians* who little deſerve that Name; nor ſeem at all to live under the Influence of ſuch an *Inſtitution*; who have undertaken the *Race* of *Chriſtians*, and yet are diſpoſed to multiply upon Themſelves, more and more of thoſe *Hindrances* which They find agreeable at preſent, rather than to part with *Every*, or *Any*, *Weight* that is likely to *preſs* Them down; or to remove out of their Way, *Every*, or *Any*, *Stumbling-block*, that may hinder the *Succeſs* of their Courſe. Again,

5. It

5, It was thought neceſſary for the ſucceſsful Performance of thoſe *Races* and *Conteſts* of Old, that They who *ran* and ſtrove in them ſhould be inflamed and animated with the Proſpect of *Victory*, and the Glory conſequent upon it; that They ſhould ever have the *Crown* of Leaves (*fading* as it was) before their Eyes, and the Shouts and Acclamations of the *Spectators*, (*vain* as They were) in their Ears. And from hence We *Chriſtians* may be taught, That, in order to our ſucceſsful running the *Race* that is ſet before us in the *Goſpel*, and contending for another Kind of *Victory*, it is highly neceſſary that We ſhould always have in our Thoughts the juſt Expectation of that *incorruptible Crown* of *Glory* hereafter, which is to be the Reward of our *Victory* here. This our bleſſed *Lord* himſelf judged worthy of his own Character. To whom St. *Paul* therefore, directs our View, in the *Paſſage* juſt now cited, *looking unto Jeſus, who, for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame.* This all the *Apoſtles* of our *Lord* thought highly requiſite, in the extraordinary Courſe They had undertaken to run, and the *Fight* They had to fight; to conſider the *Rewards* They were at laſt to inherit; and that all their Conflicts, in

ERM. XVIII.

this World, were *not worthy to be compared with the Glory* that *ſhall be reveled.* And They owned that This it was which kept Them firm and faithful to their great Maſter, in the difficult Office he had called them to. It may well, therefore, become *Us*, who ſtand in need of all Supports, and all moving Conſiderations, to enlarge our Proſpect beyond *this* Scene of Things, and to take into our View the *Glories* ofthe *Other*, which is to open after this is broken to pieces; and thence to draw *Arguments* for reſiſting all the Temptations here below, which are but for a Moment; and for preſſing forward, without any Intermiſſion, towards *the Mark of the Prize of our high calling.* When We conſider this incomprehenſible Reward; according to our *Faith*, ſo will our *Endeavours*, and our *Conduct* be, in our *Chriſtian Race:* And, if we truly believe that there is a *Crown* reſerved for Thoſe who bear up againſt all Oppoſition, in a conſtant Courſe of Righteouſneſs, We ſhall think no Enemies here below inſuperable.

There is another Conſideration peculiar to the *Chriſtian Conteſt*, and not belonging to thoſe Others which we have been ſpeaking of; and it is *this*, That, as the *Chriſtian* who *runs his Courſe* with all Care, and Diligence, and

and good Conduct, is ſecure of a glorious *Reward*: ſo, the *Chriſtian* who, through his own wilful Careleſſneſs, and Neglect, fails and ſinks in his Chriſtian Courſe, not only loſes that *Reward* which the Other obtains, but inherits unſpeakable Puniſhment, proportionable to the *wicked Folly* of One, who profeſſes to have the moſt glorious *Reward* in his Eye, and yet of his own Choice neglects to obtain it; and is ſhamefully contented to fall ſhort of it. This is a Conſideration which muſt work upon the meaner Souls, as the other attracts the more ingenuous and beſt diſpoſed Minds. SERM. XVIII.

6. I ſhall mention one *Inſtance* more of what was thought requiſite to the glorious Performance of the *Conteſts* and *Races*, to which the *Apoſtle* in the Text alludes; and that is, a *Perſeverance* to the End.

Many may be apt to think, that it was a glorious Thing to begin, and to proceed happily a good Way, after the beſt Manner: and ſo it was, conſidered as it tended to a happy Concluſion. But if the *Contenders* of Old ſtopt or failed, in the Middle, or even within view of the *Bound* to which they were to come; *All* was nothing, and They failed likewiſe, of their *Glory*, and of their *Crown*. And ſo it is in the Chriſtian Life. It is a happy Thing to *begin*

SERM. XVIII.

begin well; and happier ſtill to make a conſiderable Progreſs in the Paths of the *Goſpel*. But if the *Chriſtian* does not *perſevere* ſteddily to the *End*; if, when he comes within View of the *Crown* of *Glory* in the other World, he relapſes into the Life of *Infidels*, and *Sinners*, He ſtains all his former *Luſtre* with a baſe and ignominious Dye; He forfeits all his Title to the Heaven and Happineſs of *Chriſtians*; Nay, he renders himſelf much more inexcuſable, than if he had never moved one Step in the Paths of *Righteouſneſs*; by ſuffering Himſelf to be conquered by thoſe very Enemies which he had before found he could ſubdue; and by falling voluntarily from a State of the moſt deſirable Freedom, into an inglorious *Slavery* to *Sin*; and thus bringing Contempt and Shame upon the Religion of *Chriſt* itſelf.

Thus have I conſidered the *Parallel* between the public *Conteſts* and *Races*, ſo much celebrated and frequented in St. *Paul's* Time; and the *Chriſtian Race*: and from hence have endeavoured to ſhew the Nature of the *Latter*; and what is neceſſary for the happy Succeſs of it. I muſt juſt obſerve, as We paſs, That the whole Intention of the *Apoſtle* may be plainly expreſſed thus, agreeably to what has been ſaid. "If theſe Men, of whom

I ſpeak, can come, by Patience and Self-de-SERM. nial, to conquer their *Bodies*, and their ſtongeſt XVIII. *Appetites*; and enſtate themſelves in a perfect Command over themſelves; and endure ſo much, and perſevere ſo long, for the Sake of a *contemptible Prize*, a Garland of fading Leaves; Much more ought *You* to be willing to *labour*, and *ſtrive*, and *exerciſe* the greateſt Government over Yourſelves, who aim at a much nobler Prize, an *incorruptible Crown* of eternal Glory." I come now,

II. To take occaſion from hence to enlarge the *Apoſtle's* Argument, by adding an *Inſtance* or Two, of that ſollicitous Care, and inceſſant Labour, with which Men purſue after the Things of this Life; in order to ſhame Ourſelves (if we have any Shame left,) into a greater Concern for the Rewards of another never-ending State.

1. Look on the Man that follows the Alarms of War, and ſee what He can undergo, for the diſtant View of future *uncertain* Honours, or Riches: to what Dangers He willingly expoſes his Life; in what Fears, and Cares, and perpetual Tumult, his Breaſt is exerciſed; his *Mind* continually upon the Rack, ever projecting Evil to his Enemies, and guarding Himſelf againſt All their *Deſigns*; and filled with

SERM. XVIII.

with all the Uneaſineſs of various Paſſions; and his *Body* worn out by all the Extremities of Heat and Cold, and more Hardſhips than we can number. What would Men ſay, were all this required of Them, in order to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven? And how hard a Taſk-maſter would they repreſent Almighty God to be? And yet *all this* Men often voluntarily chooſe, for what brings along with it Nothing of laſting Good and Happineſs; and chearfully undergo it, for the Sake of thoſe worldly Advantages, which they often do not obtain; and which, if obtained, are never truly ſatisfactory, and, at beſt, but of a very ſhort Continuance. For *ſuch* Rewards, *Men* are often ſeen to bear what one would think intolerable to human Nature: and yet *Theſe* are but the Shadows of *Good*, which often betray Men into Exceſs and Miſery, and can never afford a conſtant and laſting Satisfaction. On the contrary; the Rewards of Heaven, though of an infinite Duration, carry very weak Charms along with them; and few think it worth their while to *labour*, and *contend*, for them. If they will fall to their Lot, without the Pain of ſeeking after them; well and good: They are contented to be made happy, if it may be without

out any Expenſe of their own: But they have little Zeal or Heart to take much Pains for it. So abſurdly do many profeſſed *Chriſtians* behave themſelves, and ſo unequally, with reſpect to the *corruptible* Crown below, and the *incorruptible* Crown above. And, SERM. XVIII.

2. Once more, Behold the Man that follows the Arts of Gain and Advantage, after a more ſedate and leſs tumultuous Manner: The Man, I mean, that has propoſed to himſelf, as his chief End, the *Treaſures* of this World, by the more peaceful Methods.

What Care and Labour, in *his* more ſilent way, will he refuſe to undergo, for the Sake of the wretched *End* He has in view; though He is uncertain of obtaining it, at leaſt before he comes to be almoſt incapable of enjoying it? He will riſe up early, and late take Reſt, and eat the Bread of Carefulneſs, and run all Hazards, and watch all Opportunities, and catch at every handle, and uſe all Tricks, and think no Pains ill employed, that He may poſſeſs himſelf of what he can never be ſure of keeping; and of what, he knows, he muſt certainly, in a very ſhort Time, leave behind him.

And ſhall not the Thought of this kindle an Emulation in the Breaſts of Thoſe who ſeek after other *Treaſures*, and other *Riches*;

Treaſures

SERM. XVIII.

Treaſures that cannot deceive thoſe whoſe Hearts are truly ſet upon them; and *Riches* from which Nothing can ever ſeparate the Man who is once poſſeſſed of them. They are perfectly ſatisfactory to a reaſonable Creature; they are of eternal Duration; out of the Reach of all Accidents; guarded by Almighty Power; and diſpenſed by infinite *Goodneſs*. And is not the Motive of ſuch *Riches* able to inſpire us with another Sort of *Covetouſneſs* than is ſeen here below? a *Covetouſneſs*, not *the Root of all Evil*, but the *Principle of all Good*; not a ſordid Deſire of what cannot profit, but a glorious Thirſt after true and everlaſting Happineſs? How can we hope to anſwer for our Want of Zeal and Induſtry, in this Purſuit, at the laſt Day, when our own Zeal and Care, about the Concerns of this Life, ſhall *perhaps* witneſs againſt us; and the *Labours* and *Toils* of Others, the *Children of this World*, ſhall *certainly* ſerve to confound and abaſh us, for our Inactivity and Negligence in a much nobler and more glorious Cauſe.

This *Argument* is ſo reaſonable that I ſhall leave it to your own Determination: and return to the *Compariſon* uſed in the *Text*; and ſo conclude.

We have a *Race* of Labour and Care, to *run*; *that is*, a *Life* of ſtrict Virtue to *live*. We have

a

a *Prize* in view, to contend for, ineſtimable, and worthy of all our Pains and Induſtry; *that is, eternal* Glory and Happineſs. We have a *Day* ſet, in which we muſt finiſh this Courſe; the preſent Life; and, after this ſhort *Day*, the *Night* of *Death* cometh, in which *no Man can run*. We have a *Judge*, infinitely knowing and righteous, to determine our *Condition* according to our *Endeavours* in this *Race*, *viz.* the great GOD, who is not to be impoſed upon, and cannot be biaſſed: and, *after* Judgment given, there is an Eternal State for us to live in, either of *Reward* or *Puniſhment*. And theſe are not *light* Matters; but ſuch as deſerve many of our Thoughts, and much of our *Time*. Let us behave ourſelves like Men under the Influence of ſuch momentous Truths; and then, We ſhall *ſo run* our Chriſtian *Race*, that we ſhall obtain that *incorruptible Crown*, which is the *Prize* we are contending for.

The

The Beſt CHRISTIANS, *unprofitable* SERVANTS.

SERMON XIX.

LUKE xvii. ver. 10.

So likewiſe ye, when ye ſhall have done all thoſe Things which are commanded you, ſay, We are Unprofitable Servants, *We have done that which was our Duty to do.*

THERE are two *Extremes* Men have run into, in the Matter of *Good Works*, and in their rating the *Service* They pay, and the Duty They perform, to Almighty GOD. On the *one* Side, Some have put ſuch a Value upon the *Good Works* of *Chriſtians*, as to make them *meritorious* of that *Salvation*, which is promiſed in the *Goſpel*. And, on the *other* ſide, Some, who have thought this impious, and injurious to the Mercy of GOD, and the *Merits* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, have departed as far from it as they could; SERM. XIX.

SERM. XIX.

and have brought down the Price of *Good Works* ſo low, and made them to bear ſo inconſiderable a Part, in the great Affair of *Salvation*, as almoſt inevitably to lead incautious Men of bad Inclinations to think them hardly worth the *Care*, or to deſerve any of the Regard, of a *Chriſtian*. The *Church* of *Rome* teaches the *Merit* of *Good Works*, in our Claim to the Rewards of *Chriſtians*: And Others, in oppoſition to *That*, teach us, in effect, that *Good Works* ſignify ſo little to our Juſtification, that we are not ſo much as to bring Them into the *Account*; nay, That We muſt caſt them from Us, when we would plead our Title to *Heaven*.

The Truth apparently lies betwixt theſe *Two*, and may be thus expreſſed; That, though our good Actions do, by no means, deſerve the *exceeding Happineſs* promiſed in the *Goſpel*; and come greatly ſhort of ſuch a *Reward*, as is ſet before Us in *That*: yet, They are not ſo inconſiderable, or of ſo little account, but that our Title to the *Heaven* of the *Goſpel*, cannot be pleaded without them; nor our Station in it be aſſigned Us, without the Conſideration of them. The *Merits* of *Chriſt*, indeed, *that is*, His Obedience, and Life and Death here below, are ſaid to purchaſe this *Reward* for us; and, if He had not humbled himſelf

himself for our Benefit, our *Good Works* could have given us no Expectation of such Rewards, as He proposes. He *suffered*, that We might be exceedingly happy, upon the *Terms* of his *Covenant* with Mankind; and that *Covenant* is, That We should abound in *Good Works*, Or, in all the Instances of Virtue and Righteousness. Nay, whatever it be, that *He* has merited for *Us*; it is all sufficiently declared to be of no Importance to Us, but on Condition that we shew forth in our Lives such *Good Works* as He has commanded. And therefore, though We are said to arrive at *Heaven* for the Sake of *Him*, who came to restore Us to the Favor of GOD; *yet*, we must arrive at it, through such a *Life* of *Good Works*, as He himself has made indispensably necessary to the obtaining of it; and no otherwise, as far as He has reveled his *Father's* Will to Us. SERM. XIX.

Which of the *Two Errors* I have mentioned, is of the worst Account before GOD, may be judged of, by considering which of them leads to the most pernicious *Consequences*.

It is a foolish and groundless Boast, to say that all the best Works, of Any Man, collected together, can possibly *merit*, at the Hands of God, those eternal *Rewards* promised to *Christians*, which bear too great a Proportion to the poor Services of our

SERM. XIX.

whole Lives, to be comprehended by us. But then it is worſe than *fooliſh* and *groundleſs*, to make ſo little Account of thoſe *Good Works* which the *Goſpel* inſiſts upon, in every Page, as tends to render Men careleſs and unconcerned whether they perform any, or no. *All* that We can do is not worthy indeed, to be compared with the *Glory that ſhall be reveled:* But, the very End of Chriſt's Appearance being to *teach* Men to *deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this World*, and expreſly ſo declared, To ſpeak meanly of thoſe *Good Works*, which are in ſuch manner commanded, ſeems to oppoſe the declared Purpoſe of the Son of God's appearing in the Fleſh; and may unhappily lead Men into a State, firſt of *Careleſneſs*, and then, of *Sin*. For, as the Doctrine is ſometimes explained, the Obligation to *Virtue* is almoſt imperceptible to common Capacities; and requires ſuperior Faculties, and ſome Subtleties, to find it out: And if it does not directly encourage many to neglect what is declared to be of the utmoſt Importance, by the plain Words of the *Goſpel*; yet, at beſt, it never can be thought to excite Men to the *Good Works* required in it.

Both

SERM. XIX.

Both these *Errors* are carefully to be avoided: and, in order to our avoiding them, the Consideration of the *Words* I have now read to you will, I think, be of some Service, *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which was our Duty to do.* They are an Instruction given by our *Lord* to his Followers, immediately after a *Parable* he had spoken to them, about a common *Servant* amongst Men, who, though he did all that his *Lord* commanded him, and performed his *Duty* faithfully, yet could claim no *extraordinary* Favour from him; nor any thing more, than to be treated as a *Servant* still. Our *Lord* then adds, *So likewise ye*, who are my Disciples, when you have done your Duty to GOD; and performed the Service He has commanded; You cannot claim that Happiness, as a Reward in *Justice* due to your Services, which God will in *Mercy* give you; but ought to acknowledge yourselves *Unprofitable Servants.* You have, indeed, performed your Lord's *Commands*; and *done what it was your Duty to do*, even for your own sakes considered as *Servants:* And from This you may reap the Satisfaction of thinking, That you cannot have incurred the Displeasure of your *Master*, or deserved any *Punishment*; nay,

SERM. XIX.

That You have a ſtrict Right to whatever *Wages* You contracted for, or whatever Advantages inſeparably belong to your *Offices*: But You cannot claim, from hence, any *extraordinary* Favours, as due to ſuch Servants; and cannot juſtly pretend to have merited that exceeding Glory which I am come to ſet before You.

If we apply theſe *Words* to all *Chriſtians*, to whom They belong much more than to the *Apoſtles* of *Chriſt*, whoſe whole Lives were ſpent in the greateſt Inſtances of Service and Obedience; We may draw ſome uſeful Leſſons from *Them*. At preſent, I propoſe,

I. To obſerve, from them, That there is a *Service* and Obedience indiſpenſably due from all *Chriſtians* to Almighty God; or, That they are ſo obliged to do all that He has commanded in the *Goſpel*; that they cannot hope for Heaven and Happineſs without it.

II. To obſerve that, when we have ſincerely practiſed all the Laws of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, given to Us by GOD, We ought to acknowledge that we are *unprofitable Servants*; and that we cannot claim the *Rewards* of the *Goſpel*, as due to us upon the Account of thoſe Services,

Services, but must own ourselves unworthy of them. This will naturally lead Us, SERM. XIX.

III. To consider, on what Account, the *Best* of *Christians* may be justly styled *Unprofitable Servants*; and to have little Reason to over-value their best Services.

I. That there is a *Service* and *Obedience* indispensably due from all *Christians* to Almighty God; or, that all *Christians*, according to their Abilities and Opportunities, are so strictly obliged to do all that is commanded them in the *Gospel*, that They can have no Ground for any Expectation of the Rewards of *Heaven*, without it. This is plainly signified in the *first* Part of the Words read to You, *so likewise Ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you*; in which there is strongly implied an indispensable Obligation to the Performance of all the Commands of the *Gospel*, in order to our future Happiness promised in it.

The Meaning of this, is not, That there are no *Hopes* of *Salvation* to a Man, if He shall ever fail in any Point of Evangelical Obedience; or that GOD will be so rigorous as never to forgive any Neglects, or Transgressions, of the most sincere, and honest, of his Servants: But that there is such an Obligation

SERM. XIX.

upon *Chriſtians*, That, if they willfully and habitually neglect the Duties of the *Goſpel*, and allow themſelves in any known Sin; that, if they do, even under Pretenſe of magnifying the Mercy of God, *continue in Sin*; nay, That, if they do not, in a regular and ſettled Courſe, *follow after Righteouſneſs*; They cannot hope to ſecure themſelves an Intereſt in the Favour of God, or the Rewards of another Life.

They are all the Creatures of an Almighty Creator, and the higheſt Obligation to *do his Will* reſults from that *firſt*, and cloſe Relation. They are all the Subjects of a moſt powerful and merciful *King*; and therefore, obliged to obey, both out of *Love*, and out of a juſt *Fear*. They are all tied to his Intereſt by the moſt endearing Inſtances of Mercy and Kindneſs; and therefore, are bound in *Gratitude* to return him all the Duty He can expect from them. They owe all They have, and all They can hope for, to Him, and his Favor; and therefore, They cannot pay him back too much Regard and Obedience. They are all to be conſidered, as under *his* Authority, and *He*, as their great *Lord* and *Maſter*: and from hence reſults all poſſible Service to ſuch a Maſter. By theſe, and many more, *Ties* are They moſt ſtrictly obliged to love, honour, and

ſerve

ſerve, Almighty God; whether He had called upon them in an extraordinary Manner to do it, or not. But He has thought fit to *ſpeak unto them by his Son*. And by this *his beloved Son*, and his *Apoſtles*, it has been declared, conſtantly, in a multitude of the ſtrongeſt Expreſſions often repeated, That without our Practice of all Virtue, and Obedience to all his holy Commandments, here *below*, We ſhall never arrive at the Place of *Reward*, and Glory, *above*. This is, indeed, ſo plainly the uniform Voice of the *New Teſtament*, that it alone may juſtly be thought a ſufficient proof that the *Unprofitableneſs* of our *Services*, affirmed in the Text, cannot be intended to ſink the Value of Moral *Good Works*, ſo as to make them appear of little Importance in the Affair of Chriſtian Salvation. This therefore, being certain, in the Diſpenſation of the *Goſpel*, That a *ſincere* Obedience to all God's *Commands*, is abſolutely neceſſary to our *Salvation*; I ſhall now proceed to what I next propoſed from the Words of the Text, *viz.*

SERM. XIX.

II. That the *Beſt Chriſtians*, when They *have done all that is commanded them*, or, their whole Duty, in the Service of God; and have ſincerely practiſed all Virtue and Righteouſneſs;

SERM. XIX.

neſs; ought, after this happy Conduct, to confeſs Themſelves to be *Unprofitable Servants*; and to acknowledge that They cannot claim ſuch *Rewards*, as the *Goſpel* propoſes, as of *Right* due to their utmoſt Endeavours. *So ye, when ye have done all that is commanded you, ſay, We are unprofitable Servants.*

In which Words We muſt not imagine that our Lord declares, or inſinuates, that the beſt *Chriſtians*, and ſuch as have exerciſed themſelves in all the *Good Works* of his *Holy Religion*, ought to acknowledge Themſelves to have done Nothing in what is called the Service of GOD, or for the Good of Mankind; or of any Significancy to their own Salvation; or That any thing like this is the *Meaning* of the Words *unprofitable Servants*. Far be ſuch Thoughts from Us, concerning *Him*, who, in this very *Parable*, repreſents Himſelf, or his *Father*, as ſpeaking to Every Chriſtian of this Sort, *Well done, good and faithful Servant; enter into the Joy of thy Lord.* And from this Paſſage it may juſtly be inferred, That a Man may be a *good* and *faithful Servant*, in the Senſe of the *Goſpel*; and yet be an *unprofitable One*, as the Word is intended in the *Text*. For the *Name*, *unprofitable Servant*, here uſed, is ſo far from being oppoſed to *One* who has faithfully performed all due

due Obedience and Service to his Master, that it is actually given to Those who are supposed to have *done all those Things which are commanded them.* SERM. XIX.

Nor can the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the *Text*, be the same with the *Unprofitable Servant*, *Matth.* xxv. 30. For the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the *Text*, is expressly described as *One* who has served GOD sincerely, and actually *done what it was his Duty to do:* and the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the other Place, is as expressly declared to have, knowingly and willfully, neglected his Duty; and called, by his *Lord*, a *wicked and slothful Servant*; and by his Appointment, ordered to be *cast into outer Darkness, where there is weeping, and gnashing of Teeth.* But the Meaning of the *Words* of the *Text* must be, that, as *that Servant*, of whom Our Lord had been speaking, in a *Parable* before, though he had been serving his Lord well in the *Field*, either *plowing, or feeding his Cattle*, could not at his Return home, claim, as his Right, any extraordinary Favor from his *Master*; could not, for instance, demand, or expect, to be invited by his Master *to sit down to Supper* before He himself had supped, as it is expressed in the Parable; or to be treated otherwise than as a *Servant* who had done

SERM. XIX.

done what it was his Buſineſs *to do*: So, the beſt *Chriſtians*, Thoſe who have ſerved God moſt faithfully, in all the Duties of their ſeveral Stations, cannot claim, as their juſt Due, the extraordinary and unconceivable Joys and Happineſs of Heaven; but muſt acknowledge that They are *unprofitable Servants*; and that the *Duty* They have performed bears no Proportion to Thoſe incomprehenſible Rewards They are to enjoy. I come now, as I propoſed,

III. To conſider on what Accounts the *Beſt* of *Chriſtians* may be juſtly ſaid to be *Unprofitable Servants*; And to have little Reaſon to overvalue their *Services*.

1. They may be ſaid to be *Unprofitable Servants*, becauſe they cannot, with all their Services and all their Labours, make any the leaſt Addition to the well-being, or Happineſs, of Almighty GOD, their great *Maſter*. And, in *this*, the *Servants* of *God*, and the *Servants* of *Men*, differ; that the *Servants* of *Men* can, by their Diligence and their honeſt *Service*, contribute greatly to the Increaſe of their *Maſters* Riches or Honour; and, in ſome Inſtances, very much promote their Happineſs in this World. But the *Servants* of *God* can only, by their Service, do Themſelves good, and increaſe

increaſe their own true Happineſs. And the Reaſon is, That the richeſt and moſt powerful of Mankind are frail and imperfect Beings; liable to many unfortunate Accidents; ſtanding in need of many Supports; and owing much of their Greatneſs to the meaner Sort who are under them: But Almighty God, being moſt perfect in himſelf, and enjoying all poſſible Happineſs, is therefore, utterly incapable of the leaſt Addition or Increaſe of Glory, or Pleaſure. What therefore, can our *Services* demand of *Him*, to whom they add not one Grain of *Greatneſs*, or *Happineſs?*

Every *Maſter* amongſt Men would account *him* but an *unprofitable Servant*, who, with all his Pains and Care, could not poſſibly do any thing for his Advantage, or for his Satisfaction; and hardly think himſelf obliged to reward him, in an extraordinary Manner, for a *Service*, out of which He could reap no real Benefit. And that *Servant* himſelf would hardly have the Face to expect or demand the leaſt *Favour* from his Lord, on that Account. Thus it is with Us, conſidered as *Servants* to the great God. We are truly *unprofitable Servants*, to *Him*; utterly uncapable of doing any thing that can increaſe or improve his Happy Eſtate.

SERM. XIX.

It is true indeed, That, as we are his *Creatures*, brought into Being by his Almighty Decree; and willing and deſirous to fulfil his Will; We may claim the Protection of his *Providence*, and his paternal Regard to Us, as long as He continues us in being; and cannot but enjoy the *Reward* of an inward Satisfaction of Mind ariſing from this Conſideration. And again, the great GOD, whoſe Creatures We are, may condeſcend, as He does in the *Chriſtian Revelation* of his Will to the World, to call our beſt *Endeavours* by the Name of *Services* to Himſelf; and ſpeak of them as promoting his *Glory*, and increaſing his *Honour*; and by promiſing Us more than We can deſerve, may oblige himſelf to *Performance* ſo, as to give Us a *Right* afterwards to expect and demand it, if We have not failed on our own Part. But, ſince it is moſt evident That we cannot, by all our Services, add the leaſt Increaſe to infinite *Perfection*; it cannot but become Us to own, and ſay, *We are unprofitable Servants*; We have, indeed, endeavoured *to do what it was our Duty to do*, which is a Comfort to Ourſelves, but we have contributed Nothing to our great *Maſter*. But

2. The *Beſt* of *Chriſtians* may be ſaid to be *Unprofitable Servants*, if we conſider the many Failings,

Failings, and Faults, they are liable to, in that *Service* which They really intend to perform; and the Mixture of many *Imperfections* in their very beſt Actions. SERM. XIX.

The ſincereſt *Chriſtians* in the World, though They do what God will, at the laſt day, accept, for the Sake of *Chriſt*; yet, They cannot be ſaid, in the Strictneſs of Juſtice, always to do whatſoever They can, in what They call God's *Service*. They have their Intervals of Coldneſs and Indifference, or of Careleſſneſs, when it may be ſaid that *the Spirit is willing, but the Fleſh is weak*. And they have, in Every State of Life, ſtrong *Temptations*, to ſtrive againſt; which they do not always entirely overcome. They ſometimes yield; or, if they do not, yet they often overcloud the *Victory* with the Attendance of ſome *Imperfection*, or other: and frequently experience in Themſelves, what They cannot excuſe even to the Judge within their own Breaſts. And if ſo imperfect *Servants*, who are ſometimes diverted from their Duty; and cannot command Themſelves, upon every Occaſion, to attend to their Duty: If *ſuch* Servants as theſe ſhould claim the unſpeakable *Rewards* of *Chriſtians*, as due, in *Juſtice*, to their imperfect and *interrupted Endea-*

SERM. XIX.

vours, They would juſtly incur the Imputation of *Arrogance*.

And beſides that the *Beſt* of Men are guilty of *Failings*, and *Negligences*, in the ſeveral Branches of their Duty, They do alſo, ſometimes, mix ſo much of human Imprudence, and of the *Imperfections* of their Nature, with their beſt Actions, that They ſpoil the good they intend, and fruſtrate the very End they propoſe to Themſelves, by their own Weakneſs and Inadvertency: ſo that, if one were to examine into the *Events* of ſuch Matters, it is a *Queſtion*, concerning ſome very well-deſigning *Chriſtians*, whether their *Zeal* and *Devotion*, intended for God's Service, has more conduced to the promoting the great Ends of *Religion*, and the *Glory* of God, in the World, than their *Imperfections* and *Imprudences*, (the Characters of which they have ſtamped upon their beſt Undertakings) have contributed to the *Prejudices* of other Men, and the *Hurt* of Religion itſelf. And, though we have to do with a merciful God, who will not rigorouſly puniſh theſe Mixtures of *Imprudence* which are to be found in the Conduct of good Men; yet, when He grants the exceeding Rewards of Heaven, and the unexpreſſible Glories of a *future* State to ſuch *Servants*; this muſt be accounted

accounted a *Favor*, and not a *Debt*; promiſed to Them by the unmerited Goodneſs of a merciful God; and given to Them, as *Due* on Account of that Promiſe, and not for any thing done by Them previouſly to it. Certainly, were They themſelves, who are encompaſſed with ſuch Imperfections, and give daily proofs of ſuch Imprudences, made Judges in their own Caſe, and ſet to determine what Name They themſelves deſerve; whether the Name of *Meritorious*, or of *Unprofitable*, Servants; They would, with all Humility, acknowledge that the *Latter* Title was their due; and That, though They had, in the main, truly intended the *Service* and Honour of God, in the Courſe of their Actions, yet They had not always proſecuted their Deſign, or done their Duty, after ſuch a Manner as to deſerve any better Word, or Character. SERM. XIX.

3. The *Beſt Chriſtians* may, in no very improper Senſe, be called *Unprofitable Servants*, conſidered in Themſelves, and their own *Merits*; and juſtly be ſaid to have little Reaſon to boaſt of any thing They can do; becauſe They have received their whole *Capacity*, even of doing any Duty at all, from that *Maſter* himſelf, whom They *ſerve*.

If We carry our Thoughts back, and conſider our *Creation* only, We may truly ſay

SERM. XIX.

that *Almighty God* endowed us, at our firſt coming into Being, with all the Powers and Faculties we have; and gave us even the *Poſſibility* of ſerving Him: and if we have any Strength, by our original Frame, to do any good Actions, This very Power is the Gift of our *Creator* and *Maſter*. And, if We go farther, in our Thoughts, as *Chriſtians*, We ſhall find That GOD, after having given Us theſe Capacities of Good, did not ſtop here, but, in Mercy to Us, ſent his *Son* into the World, to make us freſh Offers of his Favor, and to promulgate the ſtrongeſt Motives and Arguments for the Performance of our *Duty*, which is his own *Service*; and that, in order to this, his *Holy Spirit* is repreſented, in the *Goſpel*, as procured by *Chriſt*; and given to the *Prayers* of thoſe *Chriſtians*, who duly and heartily aſk it.

If therefore, GOD communicated to us, at firſt, all the Powers and Faculties of Moral Agency, which We enjoy; and if the ſame God affords us all the Aſſiſtance in our Service to Him, which is proper and neceſſary for Us; with what *Right* can We ſet ſuch an immoderate Value upon our Services to *Him*, as cannot poſſibly be juſtified, unleſs We could evidently demonſtrate that our *Good Works* are altogether *Our own*, in this

Senſe, *that We Ourſelves* were the Original Framers of All the *Capacities* We are endowed with; and the Givers of all the *Powers* We find in our *Conſtitution*; which is the higheſt *Abſurdity:* and that GOD our great *Creator*, and *Chriſt* our merciſull *Redeemer*, have no part in Them; which is the greateſt *Impiety*. SERM. XIX.

We find St. *Paul*, who, in that *Fooliſhneſs* of *Boaſting* which He excuſes from the *Provocation* of his *Enemies*, declares that *He had laboured* more abundantly than *All* the Other *Apoſtles*, ending his triumphant Speeches with Acknowledgments of what was due to the Aſſiſtance of GOD; and laying the Glory of his Labors at the Feet of his *great Maſter*. And, in Imitation of ſuch an *Example*, the *Beſt* of *Chriſtians*, who have been the moſt exemplary in all *Virtue* and *Goodneſs*, and the moſt abounding in all *the Fruits of the Spirit*, have been always found the moſt ready to refer the Glory and Praiſe of their well-ſpent Life to that *Lord*, who taught and led them; and to attribute the Succeſs of their Labors to a kind *Providence*, and to a *Conductor ſuperior* to Themſelves. Conſidering therefore, under whoſe Diſcipline, and Direction, Chriſtians act, in the *Service* of their Maſter; and to whom They owe the very *Capacity*

SERM. XIX.

and *Power* of acting at all, in that *Service*, They have too juſt Reaſon to ſpeak of Themſelves as *Unprofitable Servants*; and as utterly void of any *Claim* to *extraordinary Favors* from God, for having performed that *Duty*, which He himſelf gave them the *Power* of performing.

I have now done what I propoſed from the *Words* of the Text; and have ſhewn, I hope, That there is an indiſpenſable Obligation upon all *Chriſtians* to perform all that is commanded them in the *Goſpel*; and that, when They have done all that is commanded them, They ought to confeſs and ſay, *We are Unprofitable Servants:* And laſtly, That on *ſeveral* Accounts They may truly be ſaid to be *Unprofitable Servants*.

I will now add an *Obſervation* or *Two*, not foreign to what I have been ſaying; and ſo conclude.

1. The Subject We have been treating, may naturally lead Us to a *Queſtion* which has been ſometimes aſked by Thoſe, who, I fear, are much more willing to know what is *not* their ſtrict Duty, than to practiſe what they *know* to be ſo: And that is, Whether any *Chriſtian* can do more than He is commanded, or, than it is his *ſtrict Duty*, to do?

To

SERM. XIX.

To this, I think, it may be answered, That no Christian can possibly do more, in the great Points of Moral *Duty*, rightly understood, which are the *Good Works* required in the *Gospel*, than He is strictly obliged to do; because *These Points* are always indispensably necessary, and the Obligation to Duties never released or abated: But that, in other Points, and these not displeasing to GOD, which may be said to belong to his Religious *Service*, as Circumstances of it, a *Christian* may do more than what is strictly enjoined, as absolutely necessary to his Salvation.

This may be the better understood from what St. *Paul* says of *Himself*; *viz.* That He chose to preach the *Gospel* to the *Corinthians* without any *Charge* to Them, in order to have a greater Influence, in the Exercise of his *Office*, amongst Them; and that this was *more* than He was strictly obliged to do. For it is plain that He (as well as all others) was obliged to do whatever He apprehended to be most for the Honour of God, and the Interest of his Gospel: And yet it is also as plain, from his own Words, That, had He taken a Maintenance of Them, He could have justified Himself before God; and had ground for *boasting*, that He did not. He expressly

SERM. XIX.

diſtinguiſhes between his ſtrict Obligation to preach the *Goſpel*; and the *Circumſtance* of preaching it without Charge to Them.---" *Wo to Me, if I preach not the Goſpel.* This is my indiſpenſable *Duty*. But whether I ſhall take a *Maintenance* for doing this, or *not*; *This* is left free to Me: and I have choſen *not* to do it: This is the Ground of my Boaſting." 1 *Cor.* ix. 6, 19.

I might mention alſo what is written of the firſt Believers, that Thoſe amongſt them, who had Poſſeſſions, ſold them, and laid the Price at the Feet of the *Apoſtles*, to be diſtributed, in common, to All who wanted. It is evident, of Theſe Perſons, that They were ſtrictly obliged to the *Duty* of Charity to their *Brethren* in want: and yet, it is alſo plain that This particular *Behaviour* of Thoſe who voluntarily and honeſtly performed this *Service*, in ſo extraordinary a Manner, was *more* than was *commanded* Them by their great *Maſter*. Nay, it is declared, by St. *Peter*, *Acts* v. 4. that it was not their *ſtrict* Duty, but a Matter left to their own Choice. From whence it appears, that, in *this*, They did *more* than it was their ſtrict *Duty* to do.

2. From what has been ſaid may appear the abſurd *Vanity*, to ſay no worſe, of the *Romiſh Doctrine* of the *Merits* of the Beſt

Works

Works of any *Christians*. Nay, the *Words* themselves of the *Text*, without any *Comment*, are sufficient to shew it. For, in *them* We are supposed *to have* actually *done all that is commanded Us*, and, in another Expression, All that *it is our Duty to do*; which is the most favorable Supposition possible concerning the *Best* of Men: and, after all this, with such a *Treasure* of Good Works accompanying Us, We are taught and directed to say to our Judge, with our own Mouths, "*We are unprofitable Servants.*" And how our utmost *Services*, imperfect and *unprofitable* as They are, can merit the immense Happiness offered Us, in the *Gospel*, it is impossible for the *Wit* of Man to prove. SERM. XIX.

3. From what has been said, We may farther learn, not only the *Vanity*, but the *Wickedness*, of another *worse* Doctrine of the same *Church*, which, (for fear, one would think, that Men should not be careless enough in the great Affair of their own Salvation,) encourages Them in all Negligence, by pretending to *transfer* the *Superfluous Merits* of *Saints* (so called) to the Account of the greatest *Sinners*; *that is*, to *give*, or perhaps *sell*, the *Kingdom* of *Heaven* itself to the *Worst* of Men, void of all *Good Works* of *their own*, for the Benefit of procuring Them a Quantity of such *Good Works*

SERM. XIX.

as can be ſpared from the Stock of *Others*, according to this *Invention*.

You will, I hope, recollect, That the *Inſtances* I mentioned, from Scripture, of Good Men who have done more than their ſtrict Duty, related to the *Circumſtances* only of ſome Religious Duties; and not at all to what was *eſſential* to the *Duties* themſelves; or to any Branches of *Chriſtian Morality:* and obſerve from thence, That no Man, amongſt the moſt Perfect, was ever thought to have too many of ſuch *Good Works*; or, for Inſtance, was ever ſaid to be more *Charitable*, more *Temperate*, more *Pure*, more *Peaceable*, or more *Humble*, than the Dictates of Reaſon, and the *Commands* of GOD, rightly underſtood, made it his *Duty* to be. No Works of *Supererogation*, therefore, are to be found in *theſe*, or any of the *Moral* Virtues. And theſe being the only *Good Works*, of any Account, at the Great Day; No *Chriſtian*, who is deſtitute of them, *Himſelf*, can poſſibly be ſupplied by Others; becauſe, of *theſe* truly and neceſſary *Good Works*, the *Beſt* Man in the World, has *none* to ſpare; but rather juſtly fears he has not enough for *Himſelf*, and for the Security of his own eternal Intereſt. And as to any Miſtakes of *Ignorance*, or *Enthuſiaſm*; ſuch as the *Romantic Exceſſes* of Some, in the

Rigors

Rigors of *Abſtinence*, or the *Severities* of *Penances*, and the like; They may, by a good GOD, be *pardoned* to well-meaning Men; but can never be acceptable or pleaſing to Him. Conſequently, ſuch as theſe, though, in truth, *Works* of *Supererogation*, yet cannot be thought, by any Man in his Senſes, to be the *Good Works* of the *Goſpel*. They may indeed be granted, or ſold, to Thoſe upon whom the Managers of ſuch Merchandiſe can impoſe. But it is impoſſible They ſhould do any real Service to Thoſe deluded Men who depend upon Them, becauſe They are not the *Good Works* required of *Chriſtians*, as neceſſary to Salvation.

4. Laſtly, if, from what has been ſaid, We are truly convinced of the *Neceſſity* of *Good Works*, as the indiſpenſable *Condition* of our future Happineſs; though not of their *Merit*, as the adequate Foundation of our Claim to it; Let this induce us not to be ſo incenſed againſt the *Doctrine* of the *Merit* of *Good Works*, as to avoid Them, for fear of being tainted by it; and not to dwell ſo much upon the *Merits* of *Chriſt*, as to forget the *Conditions* which he abſolutely requires at our Hands. For it may, I think, juſtly, be ſaid, That we had much better believe the *Merit* of *Good Works*, than have None at all to produce for

SERM. XIX.

for Ourſelves at the laſt Day: And that it will be found a more pardonable Error, at that Time, not to have conſidered ſo much as We ought, the *Merits* of *Chriſt*, than to have neglected that *Obedience* to all his Commands, which He ſo ſtrictly requires of us, in his *Goſpel*.

May We all be ſenſible, both of what we owe to GOD, and to his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*: and alſo of the great *Work* We ourſelves have to do; that ſo We may do it, and be bleſſed in our Deed!

The

The Nature of CHRIST'S *Bleſſing.*

SERMON XX.

ACTS iii. ver. 26.

God having raiſed up his Son Jeſus, ſent Him to bleſs You, in turning every one of you from his Iniquities.

THE Doctrine plainly delivered by St. *Peter*, in theſe Words, is this, That the *Bleſſing*, with which *Jeſus Chriſt* was ſent by his *Father* to bleſs the World, conſiſts in *turning Men from their Iniquities.* This I deſign to make the Subject of my following *Diſcourſe.* And, in order to give all the Light and Evidence I am able to this great and important Truth, I ſhall conſider it under theſe following *Propoſitions*; which will, I hope, form a ſtrong *Argument* in Support of it. SERM. XX.

I. That

SERM. XX.

I. That the promiſed *Meſſiah* was to be the greateſt Inſtance poſſible of the *Love* of GOD to the World; and the Deſign of his coming, to bleſs Mankind with the moſt perfect Bleſſing which GOD could beſtow on Man, or Man receive from GOD.

II. That the greateſt *Bleſſing* Men are capable of, conſiſts, either, in never tranſgreſſing the *Laws* of *Virtue*; or, if they have unhappily tranſgreſſed, in their being *turned from their Iniquities*, to the Practice of all *Virtue* again.

III. That therefore, if *Jeſus* be the *Meſſiah*, as we believe Him to be, upon the ſtrongeſt Grounds; the great Deſign of his coming muſt be, to *turn* the World from *their Iniquities*; to reſtore *Reaſon* and *Religion* to their rightful Authority over Mankind; and to make all Virtue, and true Goodneſs, floriſh in the Earth.

I. That the promiſed *Meſſiah* was to be the greateſt Inſtance of the *Love* of GOD to the World; and the Deſign of his coming, to bleſs Mankind with the moſt perfect Bleſſing, which GOD could beſtow on *Man*, or *Man* receive from GOD.

This is ſo univerſally acknowledged by all, who either believe that the *Meſſiah* is already come, or have any Expectation of the Appearance of ſuch a Perſon; that it may juſtly be taken for granted, without any Injury to the preſent Argument.

The Deſcriptions of this great *Perſon*, from the Beginning of the World to the Appearance of Our *Bleſſed Lord*, were ſo framed, as firſt, to raiſe, and then, to ſtrengthen, this Notion in the Minds of Men. The Marks and Characters, by which He is deſcribed through the Books of the *Old Teſtament*; the Names, and Titles, and Attributes, beſtowed upon Him by the Mouths of the antient Prophets; the *Accounts* given, in the ſame *ſacred Writings*, of that *grand Revolution* which was to attend upon his Appearance in the World: *All* theſe conſpire to lead *Them* who receive thoſe Books, to look on the promiſed *Meſſiah*, as the moſt conſummate Bleſſing GOD could beſtow, or *Man* receive: and this, whether They believe *Jeſus* to be that *Meſſiah*, or not.

Accordingly, the *Unbelieving Jews* themſelves conſtantly maintained, and never could forſake, this certain and undoubted *Principle*, though they drew a falſe and fatal *Concluſion* from

SERM. XX.

from it; and ſo argued themſelves into *Infidelity* and *Ruine*. This they were ſure of, that, whatever it was, in which the chief Happineſs of Man conſiſted, *That* they might, and ought to, expect from their *Meſſiah*. But then, the great Evil was, that the whole Body of That which alone They eſteemed their *Religion*, was of ſo low and earthly a Nature; their *Notions* of higher Matters ſo totally corrupted; and their *Minds* and *Morals* ſo univerſally debauched; That, at the Time when our bleſſed *Lord* lived, They did not, or would not, know any *greater* Happineſs than what ariſes from *Riches*, *Honours*, *Pomp*, and *Luxury*; *Revenge* upon their temporal *Enemies*, and *Triumphs* over the *Adverſaries* of their worldly Greatneſs. And the *Conſequence* was this, That, ſince our bleſſed *Lord* appeared in a low and mean Condition, and was ſo far from flattering their *Pride*, or *Revenge*, or *Senſuality*, that all he did, and ſaid, manifeſtly oppoſed and condemned their moſt beloved Notions; *They* reſolved to reject him, and ſhut their Eyes againſt all the Evidence he brought along with Him. One of the *Principles* They went upon, could not be denied, *viz.* That the Deſign of GOD, in ſending the *Meſſiah* to his choſen People, was to bleſs *Them* with the greateſt Bleſſing They were

were capable of; which was the firſt Thing I propoſed. But the *Other* is moſt certainly falſe, *viz.* That the *chief Happineſs* of Man conſiſts in the Gratification of his *Appetites*, his *Pride*, or his *Revenge*: As will, I hope, be very evident from the *ſecond Propoſition* I laid down, which was This, SERM. XX.

II. That the greateſt *Bleſſing* of which *Men* are capable, conſiſts, either, in never tranſgreſſing the *Laws* of *Virtue*; or, if they have unhappily tranſgreſſed Them, in their being *turned from their Iniquities*, to the Practice of *Virtue* again.

For the making ourſelves ſenſible of this, We are to conſider,

1. That *Man*, as a reaſonable Creature, has a *Principle* in him, interwoven with his very Nature, which is plainly deſigned to direct and adviſe his Practice *before* Action; and to judge Him *after* it; which calls him back, when he is going aſtray; and reproves and reproaches Him when He has acted unreaſonably. And this is what we call *Reaſon*; or, which is the ſame Thing, *Conſcience*.

2. The next Step is, That the proper *Happineſs* of ſuch a *Being* as *Man* muſt conſiſt in acting agreeably to this *Reaſon*, or *Conſcience*. *This* follows from the *Former*. For if

SERM. XX.

if the *Author* of his Nature has made him ſo, that He finds within his own Breaſt a conſtant *Monitor* and *Director*, pointing out to *Him* his *Duty*; then certainly, this *Duty* muſt be his *Happineſs*; and the acting contrary to it, his *Miſery*. The ſame *Reaſon* which tells him the *firſt*, has *Power* enough to make him very ſenſible of the *Laſt*. For, as it is a Guide and Director *before*, ſo it is a ſevere Judge *after* Action: *Reflexion*, upon what a *Man* has done being the inſeparable Companion of his *Reaſon*.

What I would ſay, is almoſt ſelf-evident. A reaſonable *Being*, not acting reaſonably, muſt be miſerable at preſent, *before* his *Reaſon* be quite laid aſleep; becauſe it is his profeſſed Enemy, and a very powerful one: and He muſt be miſerable *afterwards*, becauſe his *Reaſon* can never dye, and whenever it *wakes* (as it moſt certainly will) muſt be a very uneaſy Companion to Him. The *Happineſs* of *Men*, therefore, or of underſtanding Beings capable of *moral Agency*, muſt neceſſarily depend upon their acting according to the Rules of *Reaſon*: and the laſting Satisfaction of Creatures, endowed with *Reflexion* and *Conſcience*, muſt conſiſt in the behaving themſelves ſo, that *Reflexion* and *Conſcience* may not be armed againſt them. It is not *Riches*, or *Honours*, or any thing *without*, that can give a laſting Eaſe

Eaſe of *Mind*, which is *Happineſs*, to ſuch Beings; but *That* muſt always be founded upon ſomething *within* their own Breaſts. If they have not their own *Reaſon*, their *Boſom Friend*, they cannot be *happy*; and this They cannot have, without acting reaſonably: And if They have their own *Reaſon*, which is always preſent with them, their internal Enemy, They muſt be *miſerable*; and this They cannot but have, if they act *unreaſonably*. I proceed to obſerve,

SERM. XX.

3. That what the *Goſpel* calls *Sin*, and *Iniquity*, is, in every particular Inſtance of it, the Tranſgreſſion of the Laws of *Reaſon*; and that what is there called *Righteouſneſs* and *Holineſs*, is always, truly ſpeaking, *reaſonable*, and becoming. For, if that *Reaſon*, which diſtinguiſhes us from Beaſts, aſſures of any one thing, it aſſures us of this; That the *Imitation* of *God*, who is the moſt perfect underſtanding Nature, in all his moral Perfections, is what we ought to ſtudy. And this is what our *Bleſſed Lord* came to teach Men; to become the *Children of God*, by being (according to their Capacity) *perfect as he is perfect*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, and *merciful* as he is *merciful*; and in their whole *moral* Behaviour, as *like* to *Him* as poſſible.

SERM. XX.

What I mean is, that every Particular of thoſe *Moral Duties* which our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* lay ſo great a ſtreſs upon, has the Voice of *Reaſon* on its ſide; and *this*, not now and then, but conſtantly. There never was, nor ever can be, a Time ſuppoſed, when uncorrupted *Reaſon* does not determine that *Juſtice*, *Piety*, *Temperance*, *Chaſtity*, *Humility*, *Beneficence*, *Placability*, and the like, are what we ought to ſtudy and practice; and that *Injuſtice*, *Oppreſſion*, *Intemperance*, *Impurity*, *Pride*, *Unmercifulneſs*, *Revenge*, and the like, are what we ought to abhor, and fly from. And, what very much confirms the Truth of this, He who moſt attends to, cultivates, and improves, his *Reaſon*, is always moſt ſtrongly perſuaded of this: and None are found to be of the contrary Opinion, but Such as had firſt ſacrificed their *Reaſon* to their *Appetites*; Such as make their own Luſts and worldly *Affections* the Meaſure of their *Actions*, and aſk their *Paſſions* what is *reaſonable*. And thus, if we conſult our own Breaſts, we ſhall find the Matter to be, That this *inward Companion* never fails to applaud us every Step we take in the Paths of *Virtue*: and, on the other hand, 'till we have made ourſelves inſenſible, never fails, not only to warn and recall us, when we are going into the

the Paths of *Vice*; but, *after* we have tranſgreſſed the Laws of *Virtue*, to give us all the Uneaſineſs the *Reflexion* upon the greateſt Act of *Imprudence* can give an underſtanding Being.

And, even ſuppoſing it ſtrictly *poſſible* that conſidering Perſons might have learnt their *Duty* and their *Happineſs*, competently well, from this *Book* of *Reaſon* duly ſtudied; yet, with regard to the whole Body of Mankind, the *Beſt* not excepted, We ought always to eſteem it, as a moſt divine Part of the Deſign of our *Bleſſed Lord's* appearing in the World, to call upon Men in an extraordinary Manner, the more effectually to awaken Them to a due Senſe of what *Prejudice*, *Education*, and the *Temptations* of a wicked World, might, otherwiſe, too probably hide from their View. And now,

4. The plain and natural Conſequence from what has been ſaid is this, That *Sin* and *Iniquity* are the proper *Unhappineſs* of *Man*; and *Virtue* and *Goodneſs* his only laſting and ſubſtantial Happineſs. For, ſince Man is a Creature endowed with *Reaſon*, which directs and judges; acquits, or condemns Him; and therefore, cannot be *Happy* without the *Approbation*, and muſt be *miſerable* under the *Condemnation*, of it: And ſince what the *Goſpel* calls *Sin* and *Iniquity* is the Tranſ-

SERM XX.

greſſion of the *Laws* of *Reaſon*, and ſtands condemned, and Righteouſneſs approved, in our own Breaſts; it follows that *Iniquity* muſt lay the Foundation of *Miſery* in *Man*, becauſe it arms his *Reaſon* againſt him; and that the Practice of Virtue muſt be his only proper, or true, *Satisfaction*, becauſe it is what his own *Mind*, *that is*, He himſelf, never fails to recommend and applaud. I come now to the *Concluſion* of the Argument, which is the *Laſt* of the Propoſitions I laid down at the Beginning of this Diſcourſe: *viz.*

III. That, therefore, if *Jeſus* be the *Meſſiah*, as We juſtly believe, the great *Deſign* of his coming *muſt be to turn Us* from our Iniquities; to reſtore Reaſon and Religion to their rightful Authority over Mankind; and to make all Virtue and true Goodneſs flouriſh in the Earth.

For, ſuppoſing the Nature of *Man* to be ſuch as is before deſcribed; and his *Reaſon*, or *Conſcience*, to be the Judge of his Happineſs; and ſuppoſing Him to be working out *Miſery* for Himſelf, by tranſgreſſing the plain and expreſs Laws of his *Reaſon*, (which is too true;) *This* is the greateſt *Happineſs* he is capable of; abſolutely neceſſary to his inward *Peace*; and the only proper Method of

Salvation

Salvation to be wiſhed for by ſuch a *Being*. If there be any Force in all that has been ſaid, To *turn him from his Iniquity*, is to *turn* him from his *Miſery*; To *ſave him from his Sins*, is, to *ſave* him from his greateſt *Enemy*; To direct him to the Paths of *Virtue*, is to put him into a certain Method of being at *Peace* with his own Mind, which is *Himſelf*: And to lay the Foundation of his Happineſs upon this Rock, is to deal with *Man*, as *Man*; as a reaſonable and thinking Creature, who lives a few Hours in a World where every thing is uncertain but what he poſſeſſes *within* himſelf; and is haſtening to *Another* never-ending State, in which the good Temper of his own Soul muſt be the Meaſure of all the Happineſs He can hope for. SERM. XX

We may, then, very ſafely conclude, That no Deſign but *This* could have been ſo much for the Happineſs of *Man*; or ſo certain a Demonſtration of the *Love* of *God* to Him; or ſo worthy of the great Undertaking of the *Meſſiah*, and of the Character he was to bear, of being the *greateſt Bleſſing* God could beſtow, or Man receive.

Nay, if We may have leave to make a *Suppoſition* ſo unbecoming, and yet ſo agreable to *Jewiſh* Prejudices; If our *Lord* had

SERM. XX.

come, on any other Errand; and appeared with all that Pomp of Majeſty the *Jews* expected: If He had confirmed *Them*, in all temporal Proſperity; led captive *Nations* in Triumph through their Streets; and made Them drunk with the Blood of their *Enemies*: If ſuch as theſe, I ſay, had been his Deſigns; the *Jews* of that Age (if they had argued aright) might have found ſtrong and reaſonable *Prejudices* againſt Him; and rejected him without that *Guilt* which They then brought themſelves under. For, truly ſpeaking, what a poor *Attempt* would *This* have been, and how ſmall an Advance to their true Happineſs? What a mighty Bleſſing would it have been to ſuch a Creature a *Man*, to be put in Poſſeſſion of all the Earthly Honour and Grandeur imaginable, to have lived a few Days in *Pomp* and *State*, and then gone off the *Stage*, not only with the more Unwillingneſs, but with a Mind quite unprepared for the Good things of *Another* State, in which no ſuch vain Appearances can have any Place? Or, to have been encompaſſed with all the *Riches* the greateſt *Luxury* could deſire, in a World from which He himſelf was ſoon to be ſeparated? Or, what great *Satisfaction* could it be, to *Him*, to ſee all his *Temporal Enemies* conquered; if He himſelf

is

is ſubdued by *worſe* Enemies; and is that miſerable Slave, who is every Day doing thoſe things which He cannot but condemn himſelf for doing; and which arm his own Conſcience againſt Him? SERM. XX.

Thus far, then, we have proceeded; and the Argument ſtands thus. The *Meſſiah* was to be the Author of the *Greateſt Bleſſing* Men are capable of. The *Greateſt Bleſſing* human Nature is capable of, conſiſts in the *Practice* of all that is good and virtuous. Therefore the great Deſign of the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, into the World, muſt be *to turn every one of Us from our Iniquities*, as St. *Peter* in the *Text* affirms.

I ſhall now make ſome *Obſervations*, and draw ſome *Inferences*, which ſeem naturally to offer themſelves from what has already been ſaid.

1. The *firſt* is, That our *Bleſſed Lord* himſelf, and his immediate Followers, give an Account of the *Nature* of his *Bleſſing*, exactly agreeable to what has been already argued, from the *Frame* of *Man*, and the *Voice* of *Reaſon*.

As for *Himſelf*; He profeſſed himſelf indeed, a *King*, by profeſſing himſelf the *Meſſiah*. But then, He took all Occaſions to

SERM. XX.

avoid whatever might look as if He thought of erecting an *Earthly Kingdom*; and very ſeverely to rebuke his *Diſciples* for their groſs Notions of the *Nature* of his Deſign; and to aſſure them, before hand, that, inſtead of earthly Glory and Grandeur, He himſelf was to meet with Scorn, and Contempt, and Reproaches, and Death; and that *They* muſt not think to eſcape better than their *Maſter*. Agreeably to this, when he was accuſed before *Pilate*, He acknowledged, indeed, that He was that very *King* the *Jews* were taught to expect; but at the ſame time, He ſolemnly profeſſed that *His Kingdom was not of this World*, (*John* xviii. 36.) And his whole *Life*, and *Doctrine*, ſpake the ſame thing.

And his *Apoſtles*, who were to preach the *Goſpel* of *His Kingdom* to all Nations; how carnal ſoever in their Apprehenſions of things They were, at firſt; as ſoon as He had opened their Eyes, and taught them the Truth, and poured forth his *Spirit* upon Them, we find Them ſo far from expecting worldly Pomp and Glory, as *his Diſciples*, that They looked for nothing but *Perſecution*, *Bonds*, *Impriſonment*, and even *Death* itſelf. And their *Notions* of their *Maſter's Kingdom* were ſo altered, that their conſtant *Declarations*, after his *Reſurrection*, were, That the great

great Deſign of the appearing of the Son of GOD was, *to deſtroy the Works of the Devil*, the great Adverſary to all Virtue; That the great End of the *Life*, and *Death*, and *Reſurrection*, of *Chriſt*, was to *teach* all Men *to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World*, as an abſolutely neceſſary Condition of their *future* Happineſs. Theſe, and the like Declarations, ſcattered through every *Page* of the *New Teſtament*, evidently ſhew, that neither our *Lord*, nor his *Apoſtles*, knew of any greater *Bleſſing* He was to beſtow upon *Men*, than the *turning them from their Iniquities*; and that *This* was really the *Bleſſing*, with which He was ſent by GOD to *bleſs* the World. SERM. XX.

2. From what has been ſaid, it appears, that the *Jews*, who rejected our Lord, had but a very *ſlender* and weak Excuſe to make for this, from the Manner in which the *Prophets* ſpake of this great Perſon.

It cannot indeed, be denied that their Antient *Prophets* ſet forth the *Meſſiah* ſometimes in a moſt *lofty* and exalted Style; and repreſent *Him*, as a *King*, the Extent of whoſe *Kingdom*, ſhould be the whole Earth; and as a Prince, ſitting upon the *Throne* of *David*, with a *Sceptre*, and all the *Enſigns* of Royal Authority;

SERM. XX.

Authority; veſted with ſufficient Power to deſtroy the Enemies of his People; and the like. But it is true alſo, that, in the ſame Prophets, there are ſo many *Paſſages* allowed to belong to the ſame Perſon, which either deſcribe his Kingdom as of quite another Nature than the *Kingdoms* of this World; or *Himſelf*, as a *Man* in a *low* and *ſuffering* Condition; that Many of the *Jews* themſelves were reduced to the *Neceſſity* of inventing *Two Meſſiahs*, to anſwer to theſe different *Deſcriptions*; when, by a due Conſideration, They might reaſonably have applied all to One and the ſame Perſon. And *this* They would naturally have done, if They had not been too much debauched in all their *Principles*, and *Practice*, to be diſpoſed to conſider either the Nature of GOD; or the Frame of Man, and the Dictates of the common *Voice* of their own Reaſon, in Matters of ſuch a Kind.

For Proof of this, it may be obſerved, That it would not have been very hard for ſerious Perſons to have accounted for all ſuch lofty and figurative *Deſcriptions* of their *Prophets*, after ſuch a Manner as this. There is a *Spiritual Kingdom*, as well as a *Temporal* one: And He who reigns in the Hearts of his Subjects is a *King* and *Lord*, as much as the greateſt *Potentate*

SERM. XX.

tentate on Earth: There are *Enemies* to the *Spiritual* and *Eternal* Happineſs of Man, as well as to his *preſent* Eaſe and Proſperity: And Theſe are the ſame, with regard to the true and proper Happineſs of *Man*, that earthly Tyrants are, to his worldly Peace and Quiet: and *He*, who ſubdues theſe, and delivers us from them, is the ſame, with reſpect to our real and ſubſtantial Happineſs, as a *good Prince*, who reſcues us from the Tyrants of this World, is, with reſpect to all our temporal Enjoyments. And therefore, if their antient *Prophets*, in repreſenting the ſpiritual Kingdom of the *Meſſiah*, make uſe of *Words* which ſignify the greateſt *Bleſſing*, and *Glory*, in *ſenſible* Matters; if He be ſaid to have his *Throne* and his *Sceptre*; if the Enemies he is to ſubdue, are ſpoken of by the *Prophets* in the ſame *Terms* by which *Temporal Enemies* are deſcribed; if his redeeming us from their Power is repreſented by ſuch *Words*, as *Conqueſts*, *Victories*, and *Triumphs*; this is juſtified by the Uſe of very high *Figurative* Expreſſions, upon many Occaſions, in *all*, but eſpecially the *Eaſtern*, *Languages*; without the Thought that ſuch Expreſſions would be taken *literally*; or that Thoſe, who were moſt concerned in them, would not make uſe of their *Common Senſe*, in the

SERM. XX.

the Interpretation of Them. The *Jews* indeed knew this *Figurative Style* to be almoſt always the *Prophetic Style*; and not to be interpreted, in other Caſes, according to the *Letter:* and therefore, might have learned another, and a true, Doctrine from ſuch *Figures* of *Speech*. And this they were ſtill more directed to do, in the preſent Caſe, by many *plain Expreſſions* in ſeveral Paſſages of the *Prophets*, mixed with the *Lofty* and *Metaphorical* ones, and neceſſarily interpreting them: Such, I mean, as repreſented the Diſpenſation of their *Meſſiah* to have been deſigned *to make an End of Sin*, and *bring in everlaſting Righteouſneſs*; and ſuch as give *This* peculiar *Character* of *it*, that under it GOD would *write his Laws in the Hearts* of his *People*; and *remember their Sins no more*; and Others of the like Sort. All which is fully ſufficient to ſhew the Guilt of that Infidelity of the *Jews*, which was owing to their total and wilful Neglect of ſuch Conſiderations, as ought to have directed their Thoughts, and influenced their Conduct, upon this Occaſion.

3. It will not be improper to obſerve, That what has been ſaid may lead Us to the true Senſe of thoſe *Figurative* Expreſſions in the *New Teſtament*, relating to this ſame *Bleſſing* of

of the *Meſſiah*, which have cauſed great Variety of Sentiments and Debates. I mean particularly ſuch ſeemingly hard *Phraſes* as, *being born again*; *being created again to good Works*; *renewed in our Minds*; *putting off the old Man*, or *the whole Body of Sin*; and *putting on the new Man*, in all *Holineſs* and *Righteouſneſs*; being *dead* with *Chriſt unto Sin*, and *ariſing* again with *Him* to a *new Life*: and other extraordinary *Forms* of *Speech* to the ſame Purpoſe. All theſe are juſtly and truly explained by the plain *Phraſes* of *ceaſing from Sin*, and *Learning to do Righteouſneſs*; and, in the Words before Us, by being turned *from our Iniquities to all Virtue*; by leading a *new Life* of habitual Holineſs: and ſet forth no other Doctrine than that *the Bleſſing* of the *Meſſiah* conſiſted in calling the World from their former cuſtomary *Sins*, to the *Practice* of all the *Duties* of *moral Righteouſneſs*.

4. From what has been ſaid may juſtly be concluded the *Preſumption* and *Iniquity*, of that *Church*, which aſſumes to itſelf the Privilege of *bleſſing* Chriſtians in a way abſolutely contradictory to what is laid down in the *Text*, and other Places of the New Teſtament. What I mean is This. Our *Lord* and his *Apoſtles* declare his *Bleſſing* to conſiſt in the making Us happy, by *turning* Us from all

SERM. XX.

all our *Iniquities*. A Body of Men, calling themſelves *his Diſciples*, and even *his only Diſciples*, ſtand forth, and openly undertake and promiſe to *Sinners*, That *They* will *bleſs* and *ſave* them, *without* their being *turned from their Iniquities*; without *one* Mark of their *Converſion* through their paſt Lives; or one Mark of it, in their laſt Hours, unleſs it be a Declaration of their Sorrow. And *this*, which has no Relation to their *Converſion* from their *Iniquities* to a Courſe of *Righteouſneſs*, They profeſs to make *Equivalent* to a paſt good Life; and, by ſome Methods invented by themſelves, warrant the Arrival of their Diſciples at *Happineſs*, as effectually as if they had ſpent many Years in Obedience to the Laws of God. *This*, and the like *Doctrines* of *Indulgences*, and *Pardons*, for the Encouragement of *Sinners* in not *being turned from their Iniquities*, are ſuch manifeſt and direct Contradictions to the whole Tenor of our *Lord's* own *Declarations*, that there cannot be the leaſt Need of one Word to recommend ſuch *Blaſphemy* to the Abhorrence of all *Chriſtians*, beſides the bare Mention of them.

5. Others, who have ſeparated from ſo polluted a *Church*, may learn not to imitate, in the leaſt Degree, One of the worſt Practices in that Communion which they have forſaken.

forſaken. And how near to this *Preſumption* of the *Church* of *Rome* They come, who take upon them to adminiſter the Comforts of GOD'S Mercy in *Chriſt*, under the Terrors of Death, to Thoſe who have willfully ſtood out againſt all the moſt powerful Motives to Amendment through their whole paſt Lives, let themſelves judge: but let Them firſt conſider how fatal to *Living Sinners* it may prove, to ſee ſuch Encouragement given to the *Hopes* of *Dying Ones*; and how naturally This muſt lead Thoſe who are Witneſſes to it, to think aſſuredly of *Salvation* and *Mercy* at laſt, without being *turned from their Iniquities* in any Part of their former Life. Who muſt anſwer for This great *Injury* to the *Goſpel*, and to the *Men* themſelves chiefly concerned, but *They*, who are at any Time guilty of proſtituting the *Doctrine* of *Salvation* from *Sin*, to the Service of *Sin* itſelf; and ſubſtitute a *Repentance*, which is only a *Sorrow*, and *Dread* of *Puniſhment*, into the Place of that *Repentance*, which is *Amendment* of Life; and which *alone* their Lord and Maſter declares to be acceptable?

6. Laſtly. Let this practical Argument be ever in our Minds. If this *turning of Us from our Iniquities* be the *Bleſſing* which Reaſon itſelf teaches us to expect from *Him*, who was

SERM. XX.

was to be the greateſt Inſtance of GOD's Mercy to *Sinners*; if This be what the *Jews* themſelves had Reaſon to look for, from their *Meſſiah*; if This be the ſerious and conſtant Declaration of our *Lord* himſelf, and the ſettled Doctrine of his *Apoſtles*; it follows moſt certainly, That *We* are not to hope for any *Bleſſing* from our *Saviour Jeſus*, the *Chriſt*, or *Meſſiah*, but as we are *turned from our Iniquities* to the Practice of all *Virtue*; That, without this indiſpenſable Condition, we have no Title to the Rewards promiſed by Him; nay, That againſt thoſe profeſſed *Chriſtians* who ſtill keep their *Iniquities*, the *Meſſiah* himſelf will pronounce the *Wrath* of GOD; *Depart from Me, ye Workers of Iniquity.*

The *Concluſion* of the whole, and the *Sum* of all that moſt nearly concerns Us, We muſt always remember to be This, *If we know theſe Things, happy are We* only, *if we do them.*

FINIS.

Date Due

AP 20 '56
MAY 2 '56